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SELECTIONS
from
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Edited by

A. C. BENSON

C.V.O., LL.D.

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS selection from the works of Ruskin is designed to illustrate the development of his personality and literary style rather than his critical methods, or his economic principles, or his social theories. It is on his merits as a writer and a moralist that his ultimate fame will probably be based, and it is as a literary artist that he is represented here.

My thanks are due in the first place to Messrs George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., and to the Ruskin Trustees for permission to include extracts from volumes which are still in copyright; and further to Mr Percy Lubbock and to Mr S. C. Cockerell for their kindness in reading the volume, and making many useful suggestions.

A. C. BENSON

MAGDALENE COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE
June 29, 1923.

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INTRODUCTION

JOHN RUSKIN was born at 54, Hunter Street, near Brunswick Square, on February 8, 1819. His father and mother were first cousins, and the family took its origin from the Lowlands of Scotland, the native home of great prose-writers. It was a curiously secluded household, ill adapted, one would think, for the nurture of genius, a reserved and restricted little circle, intensely preoccupied with its own concerns. The father was a wine-merchant, who slowly amassed wealth, "an entirely honest merchant" as his son described him in the epitaph he wrote for him. He was a man of great integrity, laborious and shrewd, and had a strong taste for travel and art; he bought Turner's pictures, when Turner was only scantily recognised as a great artist. And he wrote a beautiful style of his own; his letters are at once moving and dignified: and though Ruskin was himself one of the most vivid of letter-writers, the father's letters have a quality of restrained beauty which the son's did not always attain. The mother appears as a grim and austere figure, intensely devoted to her husband and her son, and with a deep-seated contempt for the sloppiness of the world in general. Yet the home atmosphere was a peaceful one; Ruskin says that he never saw his parents lose their tempers, or heard their voices raised in anger, or saw even a glance of irritation pass between them.

Ruskin as a child was brought up ostensibly on precise and rigid lines; he was formally disciplined and chastised: but as a matter of fact his parents idolised him, and he was really much petted, guarded and indulged. In later life he wrote, "whenever I did anything wrong or stupid or hard-hearted—and I have done many things that were all three

—my mother always said, 'it is because you were too much indulged.'" But he was encouraged to write poetry, to collect minerals, to draw, to read, and in the absence of games and play-fellows, probably dangerously pressed. The family migrated to Herne Hill, and later on to a mansion at Denmark Hill, where Ruskin lived until his mother's death. The whole story of his childhood and Oxford days is told with such inimitable grace and delicacy in *Praeterita* that it is only spoilt by being summarised. Yet it is clear that the training had its drawbacks. Ruskin was combative enough in later life, he was outspoken, courageous, even Quixotic; but he was not masculine; he had a touch of something like old-maidishness about him.

He went to Christ Church as a fellow-commoner, his mother going into lodgings in Oxford to look after him. He lived in fashionable society, half tolerated and half petted. He won the Newdigate Prize for an English poem, but he did not distinguish himself academically, and then his health broke down. He was hurried abroad; for a time his literary activities were suspended, and he spent his time in observing and drawing.

He had no formal training in composition, but he had been brought up on the strictest biblical lines, and knew the Bible from end to end, a fact which emerges in every page of his writings, not only in the constant quotations, but in the restrained economy and sedate limpidity of the long sentences, as well as in the sharp-edged invective, which is often cruel indeed, but never vulgar.

And so he plunged with an easy assurance into his first great book, *Modern Painters*, the first volume of which was actually published only three months after his twenty-fourth birthday. He knew a good deal of Turner and the later English painters, very little of Italian art, and next to nothing of medieval art. But he had views and principles, and his aim was ethical rather than purely artistic. His

father had cherished a hope that he might take holy orders and be a bishop; and he had his desire fulfilled by the fact that Ruskin, in and behind all he wrote, is a moralist above everything. He was keenly alive to beauty, and even more interested in the moral basis of beauty and the effect of art upon character. But these early writings, for all their maturity of expression and logical outline, show a narrow range of artistic experience, and an almost virginal ignorance of the world and human character: indeed it may be said that their value lies in the splendid eloquent passages, when he is not arguing his case but simply expressing impassioned appreciation.

The book had an instantaneous success, though published anonymously; but in 1844 he made acquaintance in Paris with the Venetian school of painters—Titian, Veronese, Bellini—and became aware that he had been shouting in a mist. He rushed off to Italy and discovered Tintoretto, and experienced a profound moral and artistic shock in realising, brought up as he had been in the strictest evangelicalism, that art based upon or springing out of Catholic traditions need not be inherently degraded.

The second volume of *Modern Painters* (1846) reflects his conversion. He drew out an elaborate theory of beauty, as the bread of the soul, and traced the moral ascent of the spirit from what is brilliant to what is pure. And it is this which has perhaps done something to discredit Ruskin's teaching, that he began to teach before he had hardly done more than begin to learn; and that while he was learning and changing his mind with great rapidity, he was still all the time teaching with gay and confident dogmatism; and thus though his work has a real consistency, his generous recantations and his eagerness to point out his own mistakes create a false impression of pliability in a mind which was as a matter of fact singularly tenacious and immutable; he changed his methods, he changed his point of view, but he

never changed his principles; he only gave contradictory reasons for adhering to the same opinions. But for all this, though his art judgments cannot be regarded as in any sense final, and though his criticisms are to a large extent little more than a judicial presentment of preferences, yet he did a great work in raising the status of art in England from the position of an elegant accessory into a matter of serious concern and impassioned enthusiasm, and in shewing that the instinct for beauty was one of the deepest and strongest of psychological forces. Ruskin's father was very anxious that *Modern Painters* should be rapidly completed. But this was never Ruskin's way. His mind was extraordinarily divergent, and though he had both industry and concentration, there were always so many great subjects at hand that he could seldom carry out a protracted piece of work; in fact, as the years went on, his utterances became more and more spasmodic, and even inconsequent.

It was nearly ten years before he resumed his work on *Modern Painters*; but it will be convenient to summarise briefly at this point the subsequent volumes. The third volume, published in 1856, begins by attempting to provide a solution for some of the apparent contradictions of volumes one and two, as when, for instance, he attacked Dutch painting for being too realistic, and yet censured Claude for not being realistic enough. Then follows a historical survey of the development of the emotions aroused in human minds by natural scenery. Volume four is devoted to Mountains. Volume five discusses Clouds and Trees, and as Ruskin said in his preface to the volume, "declares the perfectness and eternal beauty of the work of God, and tests all work of man by concurrence with or subjection to that."

In 1848 he had turned aside to write *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, which was an attempt to penetrate, so to speak, the psychology of architecture, the effect of life upon art and art upon life, the initial motive of art and the

counteracting and debasing influences which thwarted it. The Seven Lamps, which Ruskin confessed he had great difficulty in not making into eight or nine, are great moral qualities, Truth, Beauty, Power, Sacrifice, Life, Obedience and Memory. The one cardinal principle is that buildings ought to look what they are and serve their purpose, and that an artist must decorate construction not construct decoration.

It was at this time his parents arranged for him a marriage with a beautiful girl, Euphemia Gray, the daughter of old friends, for whom he had some years before written his charming allegory, *The King of the Golden River*[1]. It was a marriage only in name, and bride and bridegroom had little in common. Five years later the marriage was annulled, and Mrs Ruskin afterwards married Millais.

It was during his early married life that he spent many laborious months in Venice making his studies for the *Stones of Venice*, observing, measuring, drawing, all day and day after day, as long as the light lasted, and spending the evenings in elaborating his jotted notes. The most famous chapter in the book—perhaps the best-known section in all his early writings—is the chapter on the Nature of Gothic, the purport of which is best summed up in the words of William Morris:—

"'The lesson," he wrote, "which Ruskin here teaches us, is that art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour; that it is possible for man to rejoice in his work, for, strange as it may seem to us to-day, there have been times when he did rejoice in it; and lastly, that unless man's work once again becomes pleasure to him, the token of which change will be that beauty is once again a natural and necessary accompaniment of productive labour, all but the worthless must toil in pain and therefore live in pain... if this be true...it follows that the hallowing of labour by art is the one aim for us at the present day."

In the *Stones of Venice* then, Ruskin maintains the thesis

[1] Published in 1851.

that all human art and edifice depend upon the happy life of the workman, and he went further and maintained that "fidelity to the legible laws of an undoubted God" was the mainspring of art. But in this he was running a theory violently against all facts. The Parthenon, the Pantheon, St Sophia's, for instance, all sprang from periods conspicuous for moral and social corruption, and from periods, too, when the workman was mercilessly sweated and coerced.

The *Stones of Venice*, dealing as it mainly did with Italian fourteenth-century Gothic, had a strong practical influence, and not a very wholesome one, on contemporary architecture. But we see in the book, of which the first volume was published in 1851, and the second and third volumes in 1853, that his own interests were widening; he was moving in fact from artistic preoccupation into the study of social reform. His own unquestioning Calvinistic faith had failed him, and he was becoming aware that the entire absence of artistic taste and artistic interest in the bulk of the English nation was a symptom of some grave defect, either of nurture or nature. He was about to enter on a new phase of life, an unhappy period, full of hurried and discursive work, of broken purposes and incomplete designs, of harsh invective and vehement impeachment. Let us take a backward glance before we enter upon the new period, and consider what he had done and on what the great reputation he had won was based. What was the quality and range of the mind from which this prodigious stream of language flowed? What was Ruskin's point-of-view, his aim, the impulse which lay behind this immense volubility? It is not an easy question to answer, because there was a real duality of instinct at the back of it all. But it was not so much a complex mind as a contradictory mind. The man of all others whom in certain respects he most resembled was Carlyle. Both Ruskin and Carlyle had in the first place a supreme power of concentrated observation.

In both of them the faculty of vision, the power of the eye, was the predominant factor in their consciousness. They both had the power of perceiving and recording with amazing fidelity and minuteness whatever their eyes rested upon; but while Ruskin was more attracted by nature and scenery, by the forms and colours of visible things, Carlyle's faculty of vision was more concerned with the appearance and demeanour of human beings. And further, the chief concern of both was the preaching of morality and righteousness.

For the first forty years of Ruskin's life, while the eye and brain were unwearied, his chief preoccupation was with nature, with pictures, with architecture. Every evening, as his father once shrewdly noticed, he went out to observe the sunset as a priest might attend vespers, or as a man of business might hurry to the Stock Exchange. It was partly devotional and partly business-like. And then, too, he added to this intense zest of perception an almost incredible industry, as attested by the record of the days he spent in Venice, rising with the dawn, drawing, as he said, one half of a building while the masons were employed in pulling down the other half, taking measurements, drawing details, for ten hours of the day, and then spending the evening in literary work. He was not a great reader; he knew a few great authors well—the Bible, Shakespeare, Plato, Byron, Walter Scott; but the wonder is, not that he read so little, but that he could find time to read at all.

Then at home he wrote, talked, lectured, and wrote endless letters to friends and strangers alike. I do not suppose he ever willingly left a letter unanswered, and he threw the full current of his energy into the most trivial correspondence. Indeed his familiar letters are some of the most charming and delightful in the English language, while his letters of disapproval and criticism are so full of disdain and invective that it was once said of him that he

kept the worst of himself for his letters, and the best of himself for his talk.

What was, then, the effect of all this early art-teaching and criticism? Certainly not to establish a technical school of artistic principles. Ruskin had no exhaustive acquaintance with art; his knowledge was thorough but narrow. He had a few strong preferences for certain painters and certain types of architecture, and he had certain deadly animosities. He broke in pieces the old traditions, but he did not establish a new one. Indeed his influence on the architecture of the time was decidedly baneful. Architecture was feeling its way towards a certain classical solidity; but Ruskin gave it a violent wrench back to Gothic, and what was worse, to a highly ornate Gothic, with a liberal use of colour, well adapted for a land of sunshine and calm weather; but entirely at variance with our cold and rain-swept skies.

But what Ruskin did do was to break utterly to pieces the old leisurely feeling about art as a pleasant and dignified adjunct to life. He taught men and women to look close, to compare, to discriminate, to wonder, and above all to care for art as the most passionate expression of one of the deepest and strongest of human qualities, the love and worship of beauty. Ruskin never remained on the surface of art; he dived below it into the depths of human personality, and his real interest in art was not only the superficial pleasure in harmonious colour and graceful form, but the much larger question of what it all meant, where the artistic impulse came from, and how it revealed and betrayed the innermost secrets of the human soul.

And then when Ruskin was in his fortieth year there came the great change of his life—his conversion we may call it—though it was a logical and inevitable development, when an over-wearied brain, a pent-up passion, a natural revolt against the strict evangelicalism of his childhood, a

sense of the dull indifference of the vast majority of human beings to the things which he held most dear, and a sudden perception of the base influences and devastating tyrannies under which so many men and women were content to live, came upon him with overwhelming force. He withdrew into solitude and sad reflection. "Intense scorn of all I had hitherto done or thought, still intenser scorn of other people's doings and thinkings, especially in religion," swept the old confidence away. He wrote of himself that he was "tormented between the longing for rest and lovely life, and the sense of the terrific call of human crime for resistance and of human misery for help—though it seems to me as the voice of a river of blood which can but sweep me down in the midst of its black clots helpless."

What made it worse was that his friends, and above all his parents, could not follow him into the Inferno. They could not understand why he should throw his powers away, and imperil his reputation.

It was then that he turned definitely to social reform, and in 1860 wrote his book *Unto this Last*—the title being taken from the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. He set out to analyse the nature of wealth, and produced a theory of the state regulation of wages, as helping to put an end to the accumulation of wealth by commercial competition, which he held was as injurious to those who profited by it as to those who were enslaved by it.

The remarkable thing is that though much of his art criticism has hardly stood the test of time, the social theories, at the time both novel and distasteful, have become ideas so familiar that we forget how profound and clear-sighted Ruskin's foresight was. All these, translated into modern English, are but the principle of the living wage, the old age pension, public education, improved housing. No one who reads the book from the point of view of the present day, can easily form an idea of the novelty and originality

of the conclusions there stated at the time of its appearance. It was viewed as an advanced and pernicious kind of socialism. Thackeray, the editor of the *Cornhill*, where the book appeared, was a personal friend of Ruskin's; but he felt obliged to write, after three numbers had appeared, to say that the book was so universally disliked and condemned that no more must appear. The same fate befel a similar book, *Munera Pulveris*, which a little later, in 1862, began to appear in *Fraser's Magazine*.

Ruskin's parents were deeply distressed at the reception of the book; his father thought the theories expressed absurd and perverse; of all his friends only Carlyle stood by him, discerning in *Unto this Last*, as he wrote, "a high and noble truth...salutary in the extreme, and pressingly needed in England above all." Ruskin himself fell into extreme despondency. He had grown so used to telling the public what to think and believe, and to receiving praise and gratitude in return, that he was both chagrined and mystified, but he did not lose faith in his theories.

At this time, on March 3, 1864, to his inexpressible grief, his father died; and his grief was not lightened by the thought of the pain he had given to the careful and tender-hearted old man in his last years. He left his son a great fortune of some £7000 a year; and it at once began to melt away.

It was now, in 1866, that he wrote *Ethics of the Dust*, dialogues between himself and a little group of schoolgirls, perhaps the only one of his books which may be regarded as wholly unsuccessful. In 1866 Ruskin, writing to Carlyle, who had just lost his wife, received a noble benediction. "You are yourself very unhappy," wrote Carlyle, "as I too well discern—heavy laden, obstructed, and dispirited; but you have a great work still ahead, and will gradually have to gird yourself up against the *heat of the day*, which is coming on for you, as the Night too is coming. Think valiantly of these things."

He did. He wrote in 1867 and published a set of letters to Thomas Dixon, a working cork-cutter of Sunderland, entitling them *Time and Tide by Weare and Tyne*. The book is a pretty and fanciful Utopia, and it was mercilessly derided. But if his later work had brought him busy mockers, it also had begun to make for him passionate champions and grateful adherents; and his correspondence began to multiply. Many of his charming, wise, and yet often whimsical and even pettish letters are published, many of them pathetic enough, but saved from solemnity and self-pity by their delicate humour, often at his own expense.

In these sad years he plunged, deliberately and wisely, into a close though somewhat erratic study of geological problems, and crystallography in particular. But after this date, though he planned and even collected material for large and comprehensive books, he never really embarked upon one; though when he remitted his economical and sociological studies and went back to literature, ethics, and art, he produced some of his most interesting and attractive work, such as *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866), three lectures on Work, Traffic, and War. But *Sesame and Lilies* (1865) is probably the most widely read of all his books. There has been much speculation as to the meaning of the title. The lilies stand for beauty; and as for sesame, he was no doubt thinking of a rich kind of grain, used by the Greeks for cakes and biscuits, and standing here for the solid nurture of the mind. The book was delivered as three lectures, and in the first he deals in his best manner with reading, banning more books than he blesses, and making a clean sweep of theology, history, and philosophy, as well as of most modern novels. The second lecture is a beautiful and idealistic picture of heroic womanhood and how it may be attained; and the third lecture, on the Mystery of Life and its Arts, is an impassioned revelation of his own hopes and ideas.

In 1869 he was made the first Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford, and he lived there on and off for many years, giving lectures which were generally more eloquent and discursive than technical, mixing freely with older and younger men, and doing more than he was perhaps aware in enriching the thought of his generation by the charm of his talk and personality, and by the disinterestedness and generosity of his ideals. How he appeared to one of the ablest of his disciples, Mr Mallock, may be read in that intensely witty and audacious book, *The New Republic*, where Ruskin, under the name of Mr Herbert, is the hero of the scene.

He was in great demand during these years as a lecturer, and responded generously to the call. His lectures were singular in this, that they consisted of rather solemn and rhetorical passages, read aloud in a somewhat monotonously beautiful voice, with interludes of animated talk and dramatic action.

It was in 1871 that he bought Brantwood, a picturesque house with a few acres of wood and moorland, above Coniston Lake, which was his home for the rest of his days. He bought it without even seeing it, enlarged it, and eventually transferred all his art treasures there, and lived a patriarchal life with his cousin Joanna Severn, her husband and children, and innumerable visitors.

And then in 1871 there began to appear his most characteristic and in many ways his most interesting book, *Fors Clavigera*—the title means roughly the fate that governs human life—in the form of monthly letters addressed to the working-men of England. Into this he flung an amount of personality—vivacity, idealism, art-interpretation, humour, and melancholy—which has no parallel in literature. It is incredibly diffuse and even formless; but he had by this time learnt to express exactly what he meant to say and as he meant to say it: and thus to read *Fors* is like

looking straight into the very current of the mind of a man of genius. It is full of invective and, as an appendix to the monthly instalments, he printed many interesting and touching letters that he received, as well as many letters both insolent and vituperative, adding in many cases his own replies. *Fors* is a difficult book to read; but its incidental judgments are some of the most incisive things he ever penned, while, as I have said, in its deadly earnestness, lively humour, and sustained charm, it is like no other book in the world.

It was through the medium of *Fors* that he made what was the most daring experiment and, alas, the most pronounced failure of his life—the foundation of St George's Guild. It was a direct appeal for definite adherents. He nominated himself Master, by a kind of divine right, he claimed a tithe of his disciples' incomes, and the right to dispose of the income of the Guild as he chose. Each member was to assent to a comprehensive little creed, to work for his living, and to obey the orders of the Master. He himself gave a tenth of his remaining capital—£7000; a few bits of land were bought and farmed at heavy loss; a museum was established, and one or two local industries set on foot. But it came to little enough, owing, I believe, to the immense mass of charming and absurd enactments dealing with food, drink and costume which he promulgated, more fanciful than real, which created a grave suspicion of inveterate eccentricity in the homely Anglo-Saxon mind.

They were years of strain, of incessant industry, of profound and bitter disappointment; and in 1878 the crisis came. He was at Brantwood, working at *Fors* and the Catalogue of a Turner Exhibition; and he had just penned a sentence of extraordinary pathos and beauty about the morning mists on Coniston, when he was taken ill with inflammation of the brain, the first of many similar attacks. He recovered, but resigned his professorship, and spent three

years in retirement, writing a little, working at his many subjects, and entertaining friends; but he was never the same man again, though he was to write what is undoubtedly the most beautiful of all his writings, the unfinished autobiography *Praeterita*. Meanwhile he was by no means idle. He went to Amiens in 1880, and began a book, *The Bible of Amiens*, which is full of beautiful passages. In 1882 he went to Italy again, and in 1883 he was re-elected to the Slade Professorship, Sir W. B. Richmond retiring in his favour. But his lectures had not the old force: they were vehement and denunciatory, with much bitter criticism of modern tendencies, and full of fantastic warnings and prohibitions; it was a relief when his two courses were over; and when a proposal was carried at Oxford to endow physiological research, involving vivisection, he resigned the Professorship, feeling that his work had been in vain and that the world was running headlong to ruin.

His mind went back to the old days; and he was persuaded by a friend to write a full autobiography, *Praeterita* (1886–1888), embodying the beautiful reminiscences which had appeared in *Fors*. He told his story very simply, and neither philosophised nor prophesied, and the result is one of the most beautiful fragments in the English language, full of tender recollections and subtle perception; it makes no attempt to be pathetic—indeed the mood is often one of delicate ridicule of his own particular pretensions and vanities. But at last the end of his work came suddenly in sight. He turned from one subject to another, and could concentrate on none; one last chapter he wrote, Joanna's Care, in which he told with loving gratitude the story of his long friendship with his cousin Mrs Severn, and all that she had done for him through the years of despondency and bitter recrimination, and then he laid down his pen and wrote no more.

The ten years that followed were years of quiet family

life, friendly gatherings and quiet contemplation. Many honours came to him, and his writings became known to an ever-increasing circle of readers. He protested and censured no more; and thus the essential part of his message made itself more and more felt, and it was seen how pure and noble it had all been. He himself became gradually weaker, more and more withdrawn from the world, reading and re-reading the old books, talking little, kind and gentle, and with something of the happiness of a tired child; and at last died quietly without pain or struggle on January 21, 1900, having reached his eighty-first year. He was buried at Coniston by his own wish, and there he lies.

There is little more that need be said. He was a man of high genius, but he was not one of those serene and dispassionate natures whose temperament and preferences can only be inferred from their writings. On the contrary, there was probably no English writer whose work from first to last yields a more frank and impassioned self-revelation; he wrote directly and vehemently alike of what he loved and hated, adored and despised. He made no secret of his preferences and repulsions, and no lightest or minutest fancy passed through his mind without being embalmed in his books. In all this there is something childlike, and that perhaps gives the key to his character. His faults, such as they were, were childish faults, vanity, self-confidence, impatience; but of meanness, malice, hardness, there was never a trace. And his virtues were mature enough, generosity, industry, perseverance, enthusiasm. He served his generation in many ways by kindling a love of beauty, a reverence for art, a proud disgust for all that was luxurious and vile. It is easy to point out many things which he did not do, and things which might have been done differently; but in spite of suffering, misunderstanding and derision, no one ever lived more consistently day by day in a noble region of thought, and in deep-laid plans for the welfare of

mankind. He loathed the great cruel faults of the world —its selfishness, its cruelty, its harsh complacent judgments; but he did not, as he might so easily have done, separate himself from the world in a dream of beauty and delight—"to walk all day like the Sultan of old in his garden of spice." No, he came to close quarters with the world; he toiled for it, he desired to leave it better than he found it; and though neither wholly a hero nor a saint, he holds a secure place by his genius, by his love of things beautiful and pure, by his passionate idealism, among the greatest men of a great age.

THE STYLE OF RUSKIN

Ruskin's style is a difficult one to summarise, because of its immense range and variety. It was at first, as we can see from *Modern Painters*, strongly affected by his familiarity with Dr Johnson's writing, stately, formal, and verbose, logical in manner, full of antithesis, and resembling perhaps a species of cogent and dignified oratory. He admits this freely himself, and he also confesses how large a part his study of Richard Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* had played in the conscious formation of his style. But even so it is all interspersed with episodes of a highly poetical order, luminous and pure in expression, and full of perception and delicacy, as in the following:

> The old masters, content with one simple tone, sacrificed to its unity all the exquisite gradations and varied touches of relief and change by which nature unites her hours with each other. They give the warmth of the sinking sun, overwhelming all things in its gold, *but they do not give those grey passages about the horizon where, seen through its dying light, the cool and gloom of night gather themselves for their victory*[1].

But there are also sections of exalted moral emotion, where the sentences have a scriptural tinge—for Ruskin had as a child learned much of the Bible by heart; and then, too, there is much humorous invective and ironical analysis. Yet in these earlier writings it can hardly be called an equable and a personal style. It is strongly reminiscent, and the mood changes sharply and swiftly; but the general effect may be called declamatory rather than intimate or persuasive.

Very gradually, as Ruskin became more confident, and

[1] *Modern Painters* (1), vol. III, p. 274.

more aware of his power to charm and sway the minds of his readers, the oratorical element became less strident and emphatic, and the whole mood more conversational and indulgent. The early writings had created both disciples and admirers, but the more confidential and personal method which he now employed—which was to a certain extent developed by his discovery that as a public lecturer he was able to hold and influence an audience—began to win him devoted adherents. This outspokenness at the same time increased the range both of his humour and his pathos, and added pungency to his irony.

In 1869 he wrote in *The Queen of the Air* an analysis of his own style. He said that he had three ways of writing:

> One, with the simple view of making myself understood, in which I necessarily omit a great deal of what comes into my head; another, in which I say what I think ought to be said, in what I suppose to be the best words I can find for it;...and my third way of writing is to say all that comes into my head for my own pleasure, in the first words that come, retouching them afterwards into approximate grammar.
>
> (*Queen of the Air*, § 134.)

This is not perhaps a very exact analysis; but it is clear that when he was enunciating principles, or describing processes, or enumerating details, he aimed at giving the most direct and concise statement that he could, repressing his strong tendency to allusiveness, and refraining from any luxury of expression.

As an instance of the second method, we may take *Unto this Last* as a good instance. He was here making out a case, from a strong sense of duty and conviction, against what he considered the erroneous, because impersonal and mechanical, theories of Political Economy, and endeavouring to substitute the true principles upon which social life and labour should be based. For directness and cogency of

statement there can be little doubt that *Unto this Last* is his best work.

The third method covers the innumerable passages of impassioned description and concentrated emotion throughout his writings, where he wrote for his own pleasure. Some of these, as for instance the famous description of Calais Church, or the last voyage of the *Téméraire*, are of amazing beauty and perfect proportion: but in other cases, in which he exercised less control, there is a cloying and even wearying effect of excessive exuberance, beautiful as the individual sentences are, passages in which, as he himself said, art "of an impudently visible kind" is obvious.

But it is probably on these great bursts of word-music that Ruskin's preeminence as a writer will ultimately be based. They exhibit perhaps the most magnificent effort ever made to paint a scene in words, and to emphasise its poetical and moral significance. Through sentence after sentence of exquisite detail and delicate observation, the mood rises to a profound and impassioned climax of lofty emotion.

It is strange that few things in later life angered Ruskin so much as to be described as a word-painter, because that was precisely what he was. But he was obsessed by the idea that his readers, in their enjoyment of the literary art of his writings, left his teaching unheeded. His eloquence and his power over words came so easily to him that he belittled the supreme beauty of his artistic creations. Yet he was undoubtedly the best English writer of a certain kind of high and noble poetical prose; and those qualities are seen at their perfection in his earlier books.

So far as purely technical methods go, the art employed in these famous passages is of a uniform kind, with their linked rhythms and melodious cadences. There is no great variety or contrast, the progression stately and slow, the sentences often very long, but never unwieldy. He employs

characteristic devices, assonance of vowels, alliteration of consonants; and one contrivance in particular, by which he linked his long paragraphs together, when he selects some telling phrase from the conclusion of a section, and repeats it at the beginning of the next section. This occurs many hundreds of times in his writings.

In 1871, in *Fors Clavigera*, he went one stage further, and did what no other writer has perhaps ever attempted, in allowing his thought, however discursive and fantastic, to crystallise direct into words, until in reading it one feels that one is almost perusing the very substance of the mind that gave it utterance. But being what it is, a sort of reverie, with but little attempt to check the spontaneous movement of the mind, it displays not only the aspiring spirit and the beauty-loving mind of the writer, but also his waywardness, his petulance, his vehement repulsions, as well as the deep and morbid disappointment which clouded his later years —for Ruskin over-estimated the contemptuous opposition to his direct teaching which he detected in the minds of the public, and underestimated the cumulative effect of his work and the immense range of his indirect influence. *Fors Clavigera* is a book which is difficult for anyone to read who is not well acquainted with his books and published letters, and who is not familiar with the strange contrasts and inconsistencies of his character. And further, its allusiveness and discursiveness betray the fact that the grip of his mind was now much weakened by his severe and successive illnesses.

But his last book of all, *Praeterita*, which was never finished, is on the whole the most perfectly beautiful of all his writings. It is an autobiographical retrospect of his early years, and is written in a mood of tranquil tenderness, tinged with regret, but never with either despondency or recrimination. The style of this is exquisite in its simplicity and apparent artlessness. It is full of pathos, but saved from

sentimentality by its touches of admirable humour; the expression is clear and luminous from end to end, and the impression which it gives is that of perfect ease; but it is the ease which comes of gigantic industry carried to the point at which the laborious processes of writing, selecting, balancing the sentence, perceiving the right word among a number, avoiding the least touch of over-emphasis, filling the space exactly without any divergence or overflow, have become absolutely instinctive and almost unconscious.

It must be remembered that Ruskin was a great corrector and reviser. Most of his best passages, he says himself, were re-written four or five times, and if one studies the earlier and later drafts which exist of many of his books, there is hardly a change which is not an improvement, and of which one does not perceive the reason. But it must not be concluded that a weak piece of writing can be made good by correction. Ruskin's own theory was that a piece of troublesome and laborious writing was seldom a real success; he was equally emphatic that such pains were not thrown away, and that it enabled one to write better next time.

SELECTIONS FROM RUSKIN

CHILDHOOD

Praeterita (1). Vol. xxxv, pp. 43–46.

I WILL first count my blessings (as a not unwise friend once recommended me to do, continually; whereas I have a bad trick of always numbering the thorns in my fingers and not the bones in them).

And for best and truest beginning of all blessings, I had been taught the perfect meaning of Peace, in thought, act, and word.

I never had heard my father's or mother's voice once raised in any question with each other; nor seen an angry, or even slightly hurt or offended, glance in the eyes of either. I had never heard a servant scolded; nor even suddenly, passionately, or in any severe manner, blamed. I had never seen a moment's trouble or disorder in any household matter; nor anything whatever either done in a hurry, or undone in due time. I had no conception of such a feeling as anxiety; my father's occasional vexation in the afternoons, when he had only got an order for twelve butts after expecting one for fifteen, as I have just stated, was never manifested to *me*; and itself related only to the question whether his name would be a step higher or lower in the year's list of sherry exporters; for he never spent more than half his income, and therefore found himself little incommoded by occasional variations in the total of it. I had never done any wrong that I knew of—beyond occasionally delaying the commitment to heart of some

improving sentence, that I might watch a wasp on the window pane[1], or a bird in the cherry tree; and I had never seen any grief.

Next to this quite priceless gift of Peace, I had received the perfect understanding of the natures of Obedience and Faith. I obeyed word, or lifted finger, of father or mother, simply as a ship her helm; not only without idea of resistance, but receiving the direction as a part of my own life and force, and helpful law, as necessary to me in every moral action as the law of gravity in leaping. And my practice in Faith was soon complete: nothing was ever promised me that was not given; nothing ever threatened me that was not inflicted, and nothing ever told me that was not true.

Peace, obedience, faith; these three for chief good; next to these, the habit of fixed attention with both eyes and mind—on which I will not further enlarge at this moment, this being the main practical faculty of my life, causing Mazzini to say of me, in conversation authentically reported a year or two before his death, that I had "the most analytic mind in Europe." An opinion in which, so far as I am acquainted with Europe, I am myself entirely disposed to concur.

Lastly, an extreme perfection in palate and all other bodily senses, given by the utter prohibition of cake, wine, comfits, or, except in carefullest restriction, fruit; and by fine preparation of what food was given me. Such I esteem the main blessings of my childhood;—next, let me count the equally dominant calamities.

First, that I had nothing to love.

My parents were—in a sort—visible powers of nature to me, no more loved than the sun and the moon: only

[1] Here in his copy Ruskin wrote: "I used to watch flies drowning in the ink-bottle with complacence, but saved them if they fell into the milk!!"

I should have been annoyed and puzzled if either of them had gone out; (how much, now, when both are darkened!) —still less did I love God; not that I had any quarrel with Him, or fear of Him; but simply found what people told me was His service, disagreeable; and what people told me was His book, not entertaining. I had no companions to quarrel with, neither; nobody to assist, and nobody to thank. Not a servant was ever allowed to do anything for me, but what it was their duty to do; and why should I have been grateful to the cook for cooking, or the gardener for gardening,—when the one dared not give me a baked potato without asking leave, and the other would not let my ants' nests alone, because they made the walks untidy? The evil consequence of all this was not, however, what might perhaps have been expected, that I grew up selfish or unaffectionate; but that, when affection did come, it came with violence utterly rampant and unmanageable, at least by me, who never before had anything to manage.

For (second of chief calamities) I had nothing to endure. Danger or pain of any kind I knew not: my strength was never exercised, my patience never tried, and my courage never fortified. Not that I was ever afraid of anything,—either ghosts, thunder, or beasts; and one of the nearest approaches to insubordination which I was ever tempted into as a child, was in passionate effort to get leave to play with the lion's cubs in Wombwell's menagerie.

Thirdly. I was taught no precision nor etiquette of manners; it was enough if, in the little society we saw, I remained unobtrusive, and replied to a question without shyness: but the shyness came later, and increased as I grew conscious of the rudeness arising from the want of social discipline, and found it impossible to acquire, in advanced life, dexterity in any bodily exercise, skill in any pleasing accomplishment, or ease and tact in ordinary behaviour.

Lastly, and chief of evils. My judgment of right and wrong, and powers of independent action[1], were left entirely undeveloped; because the bridle and blinkers were never taken off me. Children should have their times of being off duty like soldiers; and when once the obedience, if required, is certain, the little creature should be very early put for periods of practice in complete command of itself; set on the barebacked horse of its own will, and left to break it by its own strength. But the ceaseless authority exercised over my youth left me, when cast out at last into the world, unable for some time to do more than drift with its vortices.

My present verdict, therefore, on the general tenor of my education at that time, must be, that it was at once too formal and too luxurious; leaving my character, at the most important moment for its construction, cramped indeed, but not disciplined; and only by protection innocent, instead of by practice virtuous. My mother saw this herself, and but too clearly, in later years; and whenever I did anything wrong, stupid, or hard-hearted,—(and I have done many things that were all three,)—always said, "It is because you were too much indulged."

FIRST WRITINGS

Praeterita (1). Vol. xxxv, pp. 224–227.

It had been well for me if I had climbed Ben Venue and Ben Ledi, hammer in hand, as Scawfell and Helvellyn. But I had given myself some literary work instead, to which I was farther urged by the sight of Roslyn and Melrose.

[1] *Action*, observe, I say here: in *thought* I was too independent, as I said above. Ruskin's Note.

The idea had come into my head in the summer of '37, and, I imagine, rose immediately out of my sense of the contrast between the cottages of Westmoreland and those of Italy. Anyhow, the November number of Loudon's *Architectural Magazine* for 1837 opens with "Introduction to the Poetry of Architecture; or, The Architecture of the Nations of Europe considered in its Association with Natural Scenery and National Character," by Kataphusin[1]. I could not have put in fewer, or more inclusive words the definition of what half my future life was to be spent in discoursing of; while the nom-de-plume I chose, "According to Nature," was equally expressive of the temper in which I was to discourse alike on that and every other subject. The adoption of a nom-de-plume at all, implied (as also the concealment of name on the first publication of *Modern Painters*) a sense of a power of judgment in myself, which it would not have been becoming in a youth of eighteen to claim. Had either my father or tutor then said to me, "Write as it is becoming in a youth to write,—let the reader discover what you know, and be persuaded to what you judge," I perhaps might not now have been ashamed of my youth's essays. Had they said to me more sternly, "Hold your tongue till you need not ask the reader's condescension in listening to you," I might perhaps have been satisfied with my work when it was mature.

As it is, these youthful essays, though deformed by assumption, and shallow in contents, are curiously right up to the points they reach; and already distinguished above most of the literature of the time, for the skill of language which the public at once felt for a pleasant gift in me.

I have above said that had it not been for constant reading of the Bible, I might probably have taken Johnson for my model of English. To a useful extent I have always done

[1] *κατὰ φύσιν*, according to nature.

so; in these first essays, partly because I could not help it, partly of set, and well-set, purpose.

On our foreign journeys, it being of course desirable to keep the luggage as light as possible, my father had judged that four little volumes of Johnson—the *Idler* and the *Rambler*—did, under names wholly appropriate to the circumstances, contain more substantial literary nourishment than could be, from any other author, packed into so portable compass. And accordingly, in spare hours, and on wet days, the turns and returns of reiterated *Rambler* and iterated *Idler* fastened themselves in my ears and mind; nor was it possible for me, till long afterwards, to quit myself of Johnsonian symmetry and balance in sentences intended, either with swordsman's or paviour's blow, to cleave an enemy's crest, or drive down the oaken pile of a principle. I never for an instant compared Johnson to Scott, Pope, Byron, or any of the really great writers whom I loved. But I at once and for ever recognized in him a man entirely sincere, and infallibly wise in the view and estimate he gave of the common questions, business, and ways of the world. I valued his sentences not primarily because they were symmetrical, but because they were just, and clear; it is a method of judgment rarely used by the average public, who ask from an author always, in the first place, arguments in favour of their own opinions, in elegant terms; and are just as ready with their applause for a sentence of Macaulay's, which may have no more sense in it than a blot pinched between doubled paper, as to reject one of Johnson's, telling against their own prejudice, —though its symmetry be as of thunder answering from two horizons.

I hold it more than happy that, during those continental journeys, in which the vivid excitement of the greater part of the day left me glad to give spare half-hours to the study of a thoughtful book, Johnson was the one author accessible

to me. No other writer could have secured me, as he did, against all chance of being misled by my own sanguine and metaphysical temperament. He taught me carefully to measure life, and distrust fortune; and he secured me, by his adamantine common-sense, for ever, from being caught in the cobwebs of German metaphysics, or sloughed in the English drainage of them.

I open, at this moment, the larger of the volumes of the *Idler* to which I owe so much. After turning over a few leaves, I chance on the closing sentence of No. 65; which transcribing, I may show the reader in sum what it taught me,—in words which, writing this account of myself, I conclusively obey:—

> Of these learned men, let those who aspire to the same praise imitate the diligence, and avoid the scrupulosity. Let it be always remembered that life is short, that knowledge is endless, and that many doubts deserve not to be cleared. Let those whom nature and study have qualified to teach mankind, tell us what they have learned while they are yet able to tell it, and trust their reputation only to themselves.

It is impossible for me now to know how far my own honest desire for truth, and compassionate sense of what is instantly helpful to creatures who are every instant perishing, might have brought me, in their own time, to think and judge as Johnson thought and measured,—even had I never learned of him. He at least set me in the straight path from the beginning, and, whatever time I might waste in vain pleasure, or weak effort, he saved me for ever from false thoughts and futile speculations.

HIS OWN WRITINGS

The Eagle's Nest. Vol. XXII, pp. 514–516.

Now the intense fault of all my early writing is that you know in a moment it is my writing; it has always the taste of me in it. But that is the weakness of me, or the insincerity. As I advance in life, and get more steady and more true, you don't see the manner so distinctly, but you will see the matter far more.

Now I will read you two very short but quite characteristic passages, fifteen years apart, for the one of which, at the time, I was much applauded; the second, nobody, that ever I heard of yet, cares about:—

> He who has once stood beside the grave, to look upon the companionship which has been for ever closed, feeling how impotent *there* are the wild love and the keen sorrow, to give one instant's pleasure to the pulseless heart, or atone in the lowest measure to the departed spirit for the hour of unkindness, will scarcely for the future incur that debt to the heart, which can only be discharged to the dust[1].

Now, that is a true saying, and in the measure of me at that day a sincere one. But with my present knowledge of literature I could tell in an instant that the person who wrote that *never had so stood beside the dead.* I could be perfectly sure of it, for two reasons—the first, that there was in the passage feeling, and the melody that comes of feeling, enough to show that the writer was capable of deep passion; and the second, that being so capable, if he had ever stood beside his dead before it was buried out of his sight, he would never, in speaking of the time, have studied how to put three *d*'s one after another in *debt*, *discharged*, and *dust*.

[1] *Modern Painters*, vol. III, p. 86.

Next, I will read you the passage nobody has cared about, but which one day many will assuredly come to read with care, the last paragraph, namely, of that central book of my life:—

And if, on due and honest thought over these things, it seems that the kind of existence to which men are now summoned by every plea of pity and claim of right, may, for some time at least, not be a luxurious one;—consider whether, even supposing it guiltless, luxury would be desired by any of us, if we saw clearly at our side the suffering which accompanies it in the world. Luxury is indeed possible in the future—innocent and exquisite; luxury for all, and by the help of all; but luxury at present can only be enjoyed by the ignorant; the cruellest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfold. Raise the veil boldly: face the light; and if, as yet, the light of the eye can only be through tears, and the light of the body through sackcloth, go thou forth weeping, bearing precious seed, until the time come, and the kingdom, when Christ's gift of bread, and bequest of peace, shall be "Unto this last as unto thee"; and when, for earth's severed multitudes of the wicked and the weary, there shall be holier reconciliation than that of the narrow home, and calm economy, where the Wicked cease—not from trouble, but from troubling—and the Weary are at rest[1].

Now, first, that passage is better than the other because there's not any art of an impudently visible kind, and not a word which, as far as I know, you could put another for, without loss to the sense. It is true that *plea* and *pity* both begin with *p*, but *plea* is the right word, and there is no other which is in full and clear opposition to *claim*.

But there is still affectation in the passage—the affectation of conciseness. Were I writing it now I should throw it looser, and explain here and there, getting intelligibility at the cost of concentration. Thus when I say—

Luxury is possible in the future—innocent and exquisite—luxury for all and by the help of all—

[1] *Unto this Last* (vol. XVII, p. 114).

that's a remains of my old bad trick of putting my words in braces, like game, neck to neck, and leaving the reader to untie them. Hear how I should put the same sentence now:—

> Luxury is indeed possible in the future—innocent, because granted to the need of all; and exquisite, because perfected by the aid of all.

You see it has gained a little in melody in being put right, and gained a great deal in clearness.

Then another and worse flaw in this passage is that there is a moment's incontinence in it—loss of self-command, and with that, of truth. "The cruellest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sate blindfold." That is not true. There are persons cruel enough to eat their dinners whatever they see, but not many; and you may generally give such lively speakers as the Bishop of Manchester, at the Manchester banquet the other day, the full credit of not seeing much[1].

But putting by these remains of the errors of my old manner, this writing of my central life is in all serious ways as good as I can do, and it contained at once the substance of all that I have had since to say. And it is good chiefly in this, that being most earnest in itself, it will teach you to recognize with greater clearness the truth of noble words.

FIRST SIGHT OF THE ALPS

Praeterita (1). Vol. xxxv, pp. 114–116.

The road got into more barren heights by the mid-day, the hills arduous; once or twice we had to wait for horses, and we were still twenty miles from Schaffhausen at sunset;

[1] At a banquet held at Manchester in September 1877 Bishop Fraser, whom Ruskin often criticised, censured Queen Victoria for not visiting Manchester, and said that she might live to regret it.

it was past midnight when we reached her closed gates. The disturbed porter had the grace to open them—not quite wide enough; we carried away one of our lamps in collision with the slanting bar as we drove through the arch. How much happier the privilege of dreamily entering a mediaeval city, though with the loss of a lamp, than the free ingress of being jammed between a dray and a tramcar at a railroad station!

It is strange that I but dimly recollect the following morning; I fancy we must have gone to some sort of church or other; and certainly, part of the day went in admiring the bow-windows projecting into the clean streets. None of us seem to have thought the Alps would be visible without profane exertion in climbing hills. We dined at four, as usual, and the evening being entirely fine, went out to walk, all of us,—my father and mother and Mary and I.

We must have still spent some time in town-seeing, for it was drawing towards sunset, when we got up to some sort of garden promenade—west of the town, I believe; and high above the Rhine, so as to command the open country across it to the south and west. At which open country of low undulation, far into blue,—gazing as at one of our own distances from Malvern of Worcestershire, or Dorking of Kent,—suddenly—behold—beyond!

There was no thought in any of us for a moment of their being clouds. They were clear as crystal, sharp on the pure horizon sky, and already tinged with rose by the sinking sun. Infinitely beyond all that we had ever thought or dreamed,—the seen walls of lost Eden could not have been more beautiful to us; not more awful, round heaven, the walls of sacred Death.

It is not possible to imagine, in any time of the world, a more blessed entrance into life, for a child of such a temperament as mine. True, the temperament belonged to

the age: a very few years,—within the hundred,—before that, no child could have been born to care for mountains, or for the men that lived among them, in that way. Till Rousseau's[1] time, there had been no "sentimental" love of nature; and till Scott's, no such apprehensive love of "all sorts and conditions of men," not in the soul merely, but in the flesh. St Bernard of La Fontaine[2], looking out to Mont Blanc with his child's eyes, sees above Mont Blanc the Madonna; St Bernard of Talloires[3], not the Lake of Annecy, but the dead between Martigny and Aosta. But for me, the Alps and their people were alike beautiful in their snow, and their humanity; and I wanted, neither for them nor myself, sight of any thrones in heaven but the rocks, or of any spirits in heaven but the clouds.

Thus, in perfect health of life and fire of heart, not wanting to be anything but the boy I was, not wanting to have anything more than I had; knowing of sorrow only just so much as to make life serious to me, not enough to slacken in the least its sinews; and with so much of science mixed with feeling as to make the sight of the Alps not only the revelation of the beauty of the earth, but the opening of the first page of its volume,—I went down that evening from the garden-terrace of Schaffhausen with my destiny fixed in all of it that was to be sacred and useful. To that terrace, and the shore of the Lake of Geneva, my heart and faith return to this day, in every impulse that is yet nobly alive in them, and every thought that has in it help or peace.

[1] Rousseau published *Emile, ou de l'Education* in 1764.

[2] For the birthplace at La Fontaine, near Dijon, the birthplace of St Bernard of Clairvaux.

[3] St Bernard rode past the lake, lost in reverie, and was not even aware of having seen it. Talloires is near Annecy.

SWITZERLAND

Modern Painters (4). Vol. VI, pp. 387–390.

GREEN field, and glowing rock, and glancing streamlet, all slope together in the sunshine towards the brows of ravines, where the pines take up their own dominion of saddened shade; and with everlasting roar in the twilight, the stronger torrents thunder down, pale from the glaciers, filling all their chasms with enchanted cold, beating themselves to pieces against the great rocks that they have themselves cast down, and forcing fierce way beneath their ghastly poise.

The mountain paths stoop to these glens in forky zigzags, leading to some grey and narrow arch, all fringed under its shuddering curve with the ferns that fear the light; a cross of rough-hewn pine, iron-bound to its parapet, standing dark against the lurid fury of the foam. Far up the glen, as we pause beside the cross, the sky is seen through the openings in the pines, thin with excess of light; and, in its clear, consuming flame of white space, the summits of the rocky mountains are gathered into solemn crowns and circlets, all flushed in that strange, faint silence of possession by the sunshine which has in it so deep a melancholy; full of power, yet as frail as shadows; lifeless, like the walls of a sepulchre, yet beautiful in tender fall of crimson folds, like the veil of some sea spirit, that lives and dies as the foam flashes; fixed on a perpetual throne, stern against all strength, lifted above all sorrow, and yet effaced and melted utterly into the air by that last sunbeam that has crossed to them from between the two golden clouds.

High above all sorrow: yes; but not unwitnessing to it. The traveller on his happy journey, as his foot springs from the deep turf and strikes the pebbles gaily over the edge of the mountain road, sees with a glance of delight

the clusters of nut-brown cottages that nestle among those sloping orchards, and glow beneath the boughs of the pines. Here it may well seem to him, if there be sometimes hardship, there must be at least innocence and peace, and fellowship of the human soul with nature. It is not so. The wild goats that leap along those rocks have as much passion of joy in all that fair work of God as the men that toil among them. Perhaps more. Enter the street of one of those villages, and you will find it foul with that gloomy foulness that is suffered only by torpor, or by anguish of soul. Here, it is torpor—not absolute suffering—not starvation or disease, but darkness of calm enduring; the spring known only as the time of the scythe, and the autumn as the time of the sickle, and the sun only as a warmth, the wind as a chill, and the mountains as a danger. They do not understand so much as the name of beauty, or of knowledge. They understand dimly that of virtue. Love, patience, hospitality, faith,—these things they know. To glean their meadows side by side, so happier; to bear the burden up the breathless mountain flank, unmurmuringly; to bid the stranger drink from their vessel of milk; to see at the foot of their low deathbeds a pale figure upon a cross, dying, also patiently;—in this they are different from the cattle and from the stones, but in all this unrewarded as far as concerns the present life. For them, there is neither hope nor passion of spirit; for them neither advance nor exultation. Black bread, rude roof, dark night, laborious day, weary arm at sunset; and life ebbs away. No books, no thoughts, no attainments, no rest; except only sometimes a little sitting in the sun under the church wall, as the bell tolls thin and far in the mountain air; a pattering of a few prayers, not understood, by the altar rails of the dimly gilded chapel, and so back to the sombre home, with the cloud upon them still unbroken—that cloud of rocky gloom, born out of the wild torrents and

ruinous stones, and unlightened, even in their religion, except by the vague promise of some better thing unknown, mingled with threatening, and obscured by an unspeakable horror,—a smoke, as it were, of martyrdom, coiling up with the incense, and, amidst the images of tortured bodies and lamenting spirits in hurtling flames, the very cross, for them, dashed more deeply than for others, with gouts of blood.

Do not let this be thought a darkened picture of the life of these mountaineers. It is literal fact. No contrast can be more painful than that between the dwelling of any well-conducted English cottager, and that of the equally honest Savoyard. The one, set in the midst of its dull flat fields and uninteresting hedgerows, shows in itself the love of brightness and beauty; its daisy-studded garden-beds, its smoothly swept brick path to the threshold, its freshly sanded floor and orderly shelves of household furniture, all testify to energy of heart, and happiness in the simple course and simple possessions of daily life. The other cottage, in the midst of an inconceivable, inexpressible beauty, set on some sloping bank of golden sward, with clear fountains flowing beside it, and wild flowers, and noble trees, and goodly rocks gathered round into a perfection as of Paradise, is itself a dark and plague-like stain in the midst of the gentle landscape. Within a certain distance of its threshold the ground is foul and cattle-trampled; its timbers are black with smoke, its garden choked with weeds and nameless refuse, its chambers empty and joyless, the light and wind gleaming and filtering through the crannies of their stones. All testifies that to its inhabitant the world is labour and vanity; that for him neither flowers bloom, nor birds sing, nor fountains glisten; and that his soul hardly differs from the grey cloud that coils and dies upon his hills, except in having no fold of it touched by the sunbeams.

RUSKIN AT OXFORD

Praeterita (1). Vol. xxxv, pp. 188–190.

ALONE, by the fireside of the little back room, which looked into the narrow lane, chiefly then of stabling, I sate collecting my resolution for college life.

I had not much to collect; nor, so far as I knew, much to collect it against. I had about as clear understanding of my whereabouts, or foresight of my fortune, as Davie Gellatly[1] might have had in my place; with these farther inferiorities to Davie, that I could neither dance, sing, nor roast eggs. There was not the slightest fear of my gambling, for I had never touched a card, and looked upon dice as people now do on dynamite. No fear of my being tempted by the strange woman, for was not I in love? and besides, never allowed to be out after half-past nine. No fear of my running in debt, for there were no Turners to be had in Oxford, and I cared for nothing else in the world of material possession. No fear of my breaking my neck out hunting, for I couldn't have ridden a hack down the High Street; and no fear of my ruining myself at a race, for I never had been but at one race in my life, and had not the least wish to win anybody else's money.

I expected some ridicule, indeed, for these my simple ways, but was safe against ridicule in my conceit: the only thing I doubted myself in, and very rightly, was the power of applying for three years to work in which I took not the slightest interest. I resolved, however, to do my parents and myself as much credit as I could, said my prayers very seriously, and went to bed in good hope.

And here I must stay, for a minute or two, to give some account of the state of mind I had got into during the above-described progress of my education, touching religious matters.

[1] *Waverley*, chaps. 9, 15, 63 and 71; for the eggs, see chap. 64.

As far as I recollect, the steady Bible reading with my mother ended with our first continental journey, when I was fourteen; one could not read three chapters after breakfast while the horses were at the door. For this lesson was substituted my own private reading of a chapter, morning and evening, and, of course, saying the Lord's Prayer after it, and asking for everything that was nice for myself and my family; after which I waked or slept, without much thought of anything but my earthly affairs, whether by night or day.

It had never entered into my head to doubt a word of the Bible, though I saw well enough already that its words were to be understood otherwise than I had been taught; but the more I believed it, the less it did me any good. It was all very well for Abraham to do what angels bid him,—so would I, if any angels bid me; but none had ever appeared to me that I knew of, not even Adèle, who couldn't be an angel because she was a Roman Catholic.

Also, if I had lived in Christ's time, of course I would have gone with Him up to the mountain, or sailed with Him on the Lake of Galilee; but that was quite another thing from going to Beresford Chapel, Walworth, or St Bride's, Fleet Street. Also, though I felt myself somehow called to imitate Christian in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, I couldn't see that either Billiter Street and the Tower Wharf, where my father had his cellars, or the cherry-blossomed garden at Herne Hill, where my mother potted her flowers, could be places I was bound to fly from as in the City of Destruction. Without much reasoning on the matter, I had virtually concluded from my general Bible reading that, never having meant or done any harm that I knew of, I could not be in danger of hell: while I saw also that even the crême de la crême of religious people seemed to be in no hurry to go to heaven. On the whole, it seemed to me, all that was required of *me* was to say

my prayers, go to church, learn my lessons, obey my parents, and enjoy my dinner.

Thus minded, in the slowly granted light of the winter morning I looked out upon the view from my college windows.

THE RHONE

Praeterita (2). Vol. xxxv, pp. 326–328.

For all other rivers there is a surface, and an underneath, and a vaguely displeasing idea of the bottom. But the Rhone flows like one lambent jewel; its surface is nowhere, its ethereal self is everywhere, the iridescent rush and translucent strength of it blue to the shore, and radiant to the depth.

Fifteen feet thick, of not flowing, but flying water; not water, neither,—melted glacier, rather, one should call it; the force of the ice is with it, and the wreathing of the clouds, the gladness of the sky, and the continuance of Time.

Waves of clear sea are, indeed, lovely to watch, but they are always coming or gone, never in any taken shape to be seen for a second. But here was one mighty wave that was always itself, and every fluted swirl of it, constant as the wreathing of a shell. No wasting away of the fallen foam, no pause for gathering of power, no helpless ebb of discouraged recoil; but alike through bright day and lulling night, the never-pausing plunge, and never-fading flash, and never-hushing whisper, and, while the sun was up, the ever-answering glow of unearthly aquamarine, ultramarine, violet-blue, gentian-blue, peacock-blue, river-of-

paradise blue, glass of a painted window melted in the sun, and the witch of the Alps flinging the spun tresses of it for ever from her snow.

The innocent way, too, in which the river used to stop to look into every little corner. Great torrents always seem angry, and great rivers too often sullen; but there is no anger, no disdain in the Rhone. It seemed as if the mountain stream was in mere bliss at recovering itself again out of the lake-sleep, and raced because it rejoiced in racing, fain yet to return and stay. There were pieces of wave that danced all day as if Perdita were looking on to learn[1]; there were little streams that skipped like lambs[2] and leaped like chamois; there were pools that shook the sunshine all through them, and were rippled in layers of overlaid ripples, like crystal sand; there were currents that twisted the light into golden braids, and inlaid the threads with turquoise enamel; there were strips of stream that had certainly above the lake been millstreams, and were looking busily for mills to turn again; there were shoots of stream that had once shot fearfully into the air, and now sprang up again laughing that they had only fallen a foot or two;—and in the midst of all the gay glittering and eddied lingering, the noble bearing by of the midmost depth, so mighty, yet so terrorless and harmless, with its swallows skimming instead of petrels, and the dear old decrepit town as safe in the embracing sweep of it as if it were set in a brooch of sapphire.

[1] *The Winter's Tale*, Act iv, Sc. 4, l. 140:

"When you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' the sea."

[2] Psalm cxiv. 6.

THE JURA

Praeterita (1). Vol. xxxv, pp. 159–161.

The village or rural town of Poligny, clustered out of well-built old stone houses with gardens and orchards, and gathering at the midst of it into some pretence or manner of a street, straggles along the roots of Jura at the opening of a little valley, which, in Yorkshire or Derbyshire limestone, would have been a gorge between nodding cliffs, with a pretty pattering stream at the bottom, but, in Jura, is a far retiring theatre of rising terraces, with bits of field and garden getting foot on them at various heights; a spiry convent in its hollow, and well-built little nests of husbandry-building set in corners of meadow, and on juts of rock;—no stream, to speak of, nor springs in it, nor the smallest conceivable reason for its being there, but that God made it.

"Far" retiring, I said,—perhaps a mile into the hills from the outer plain, by half a mile across, permitting the main road from Paris to Geneva to serpentine and zigzag capriciously up the cliff terraces with innocent engineering, finding itself every now and then where it had no notion of getting to, and looking, in a circumflex of puzzled level, where it was to go next;—retrospect of the plain of Burgundy enlarging under its backward sweeps, till at last, under a broken bit of steep final crag, it got quite up the side, and out over the edge of the ravine, where said ravine closes as unreasonably as it had opened, and the surprised traveller finds himself, magically as if he were Jack of the Beanstalk, in a new plain of an upper world. A world of level rock, breaking at the surface into yellow soil, capable of scanty, but healthy, turf, and sprinkled copse and thicket; with here and there, beyond, a blue surge of

pines, and over those, if the evening or morning were clear, always one small bright silvery likeness of a cloud.

These first tracts of Jura differ in many pleasant ways from the limestone levels round Ingleborough, which are their English types. The Yorkshire moors are mostly by a hundred or two feet higher, and exposed to drift of rain under violent, nearly constant, wind. They break into wide fields of loose blocks, and rugged slopes of shale; and are mixed with sands and clay from the millstone grit, which nourish rank grass, and lodge in occasional morass: the wild winds also forbidding any vestige or comfort of tree, except here and there in a sheltered nook of new plantation. But the Jura sky is as calm and clear as that of the rest of France; if the day is bright on the plain, the bounding hills are bright also; the Jura rock, balanced in the make of it between chalk and marble, weathers indeed into curious rifts and furrows, but rarely breaks loose, and has long ago clothed itself either with forest flowers, or with sweet short grass, and all blossoms that love sunshine. The pure air, even on this lower ledge of a thousand feet above sea, cherishes their sweetest scents and liveliest colours, and the winter gives them rest under thawless serenity of snow.

A still greater and stranger difference exists in the system of streams. For all their losing themselves and hiding, and intermitting, their presence is distinctly felt on a Yorkshire moor; one sees the places they have been in yesterday, the wells where they will flow after the next shower, and a tricklet here at the bottom of a crag, or a tinkle there from the top of it, is always making one think whether this is one of the sources of Aire, or rootlets of Ribble, or beginnings of Bolton Strid[1], or threads of silver which are to be spun into Tees.

[1] A narrow rocky channel on the river Wharfe near Bolton Abbey, where the river narrows into a swift torrent. See Wordsworth's poem *The Force of Prayer:* or *The Founding of Bolton Priory*.

But no whisper, nor murmur, nor patter, nor song, of streamlet disturbs the enchanted silence of open Jura. The rain-cloud clasps her cliffs, and floats along her fields; it passes, and in an hour the rocks are dry, and only beads of dew left in the Alchemilla leaves,—but of rivulet, or brook,—no vestige yesterday, or to-day, or to-morrow. Through unseen fissures and filmy crannies the waters of cliff and plain have alike vanished, only far down in the depths of the main valley glides the strong river, unconscious of change.

THE ALPS

Cambridge Inaugural Address. Vol. XVI, pp. 194–197.

You see, then, from this spot[1], the plain of Piedmont, on the north and south, literally as far as the eye can reach; so that the plain terminates as the sea does, with a level blue line, only tufted with woods instead of waves, and crowded with towers of cities instead of ships. Then in the luminous air beyond and behind this blue horizon-line, stand, as it were, the shadows of mountains, they themselves dark, for the southern slopes of the Alps of the Lago Maggiore and Bellinzona are all without snow; but the light of the unseen snowfields, lying level behind the visible peaks, is sent up with strange reflection upon the clouds; an everlasting light of calm Aurora in the north. Then, higher and higher around the approaching darkness of the plain, rise the central chains, not as on the Switzer's side, a recognizable group and following of successive and separate hills, but a wilderness of jagged peaks, cast in passionate and fierce profusion along the circum-

[1] Turin.

ference of heaven; precipice behind precipice, and gulf beyond gulf, filled with the flaming of the sunset, and forming mighty channels for the flowings of the clouds, which roll up against them out of the vast Italian plain, forced together by the narrowing crescent, and breaking up at last against the Alpine wall in towers of spectral spray; or sweeping up its ravines with long moans of complaining thunder. Out from between the cloudy pillars, as they pass, emerge for ever the great battlements of the memorable and perpetual hills: Viso, with her shepherd-witnesses to ancient faith[1]; Rocca-Melone[2], the highest place of Alpine pilgrimage; Iseran, who shed her burial sheets of snow about the march of Hannibal[3]; Cenis, who shone with her glacier light on the descent of Charlemagne[4]; Paradiso, who watched with her opposite crest the stoop of the French eagle to Marengo[5]; and underneath all these, lying in her soft languor, this tender Italy, lapped in dews of sleep, or more than sleep—one knows not if it is trance, from which morning shall yet roll the blinding mists away, or if the fair shadows of her quietude are indeed the shades of purple death. And, lifted a little above this solemn plain, and looking beyond it to its snowy ramparts, vainly guardian, stands this palace[6] dedicate to pleasure, the whole legend of Italy's past history written before it by the finger of God, written as with an iron pen upon the rock for ever, on all those fronting walls of reproachful Alp; blazoned in gold of lightning upon the clouds that

1 Monte Viso looks down upon the Waldensian valleys, the scene of the massacre commemorated by Milton in his sonnet "Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints," etc.

2 A peak near Mont Cenis, visible from Turin.

3 The Col d'Iseran, one of the northern passes. The question by which pass Hannibal crossed the Alps has never been finally decided.

4 In 773 A.D.

5 Napoleon crossed the Alps by the Great St Bernard pass in 1800.

6 Vigna della Regina, built by Cardinal Maurice of Savoy (1593–1657) who married his niece and ceased to be a Cardinal.

still open and close their unsealed scrolls in heaven; painted in purple and scarlet upon the mighty missal pages of sunset after sunset, spread vainly before a nation's eyes for a nation's prayer. So stands this palace of pleasure; desolate as it deserves—desolate in smooth corridor and glittering chamber—desolate in pleached walk and planted bower—desolate in that worst and bitterest abandonment which leaves no light of memory. No ruins are here of walls rent by war, and falling above their defenders into mounds of graves: no remnants are here of chapel-altar, or temple porch, left shattered or silent by the power of some purer worship: no vestiges are here of sacred hearth and sweet homestead, left lonely through vicissitudes of fate, and heaven-sent sorrow. Nothing is here but the vain apparellings of pride sunk into dishonour, and vain appanages of delight now no more delightsome. The hill-waters, that once flowed and plashed in the garden fountains, now trickle sadly through the weeds that encumber their basins, with a sound as of tears: the creeping, insidious, neglected flowers weave their burning nets about the white marble of the balustrades, and rend them slowly, block from block, and stone from stone: the thin, sweet-scented leaves tremble along the old masonry joints as if with palsy at every breeze; and the dark lichens, golden and grey, make the foot-fall silent in the path's centre.

And day by day as I walked there, the same sentence seemed whispered by every shaking leaf, and every dying echo, of garden and chamber. "Thus end all the arts of life, only in death; and thus issue all the gifts of man, only in his dishonour, when they are pursued or possessed in the service of pleasure only."

CALAIS CHURCH

Modern Painters (4). Vol. VI, p. 11.

I CANNOT find words to express the intense pleasure I have always in first finding myself, after some prolonged stay in England, at the foot of the old tower of Calais church. The large neglect, the noble unsightliness of it; the record of its years written so visibly, yet without sign of weakness or decay; its stern wasteness and gloom, eaten away by the Channel winds, and overgrown with the bitter sea grasses; its slates and tiles all shaken and rent, and yet not falling; its desert of brickwork full of bolts, and holes, and ugly fissures, and yet strong, like a bare brown rock; its carelessness of what any one thinks or feels about it, putting forth no claim, having no beauty or desirableness, pride, nor grace; yet neither asking for pity; not, as ruins are, useless and piteous, feebly or fondly garrulous of better days; but useful still, going through its own daily work,—as some old fisherman beaten grey by storm, yet drawing his daily nets: so it stands, with no complaint about its past youth, in blanched and meagre massiveness and serviceableness, gathering human souls together underneath it; the sound of its bells for prayer still rolling through its rents; and the grey peak of it seen far across the sea, principal of the three that rise above the waste of surfy sand and hillocked shore,—the lighthouse for life, and the belfry for labour, and this for patience and praise.

THE APPROACH TO VENICE

Stones of Venice (1). Vol. IX, pp. 412–415.

And now come with me, for I have kept you too long from your gondola: come with me, on an autumnal morning, through the dark gates of Padua, and let us take the broad road leading towards the East.

It lies level, for a league or two, between its elms, and vine festoons full laden, their thin leaves veined into scarlet hectic, and their clusters deepened into gloomy blue; then mounts an embankment above the Brenta, and runs between the river and the broad plain, which stretches to the north in endless lines of mulberry and maize. The Brenta flows slowly, but strongly; a muddy volume of yellowish-grey water, that neither hastens nor slackens, but glides heavily between its monotonous banks, with here and there a short, babbling eddy twisted for an instant into its opaque surface, and vanishing, as if something had been dragged into it and gone down. Dusty and shadeless, the road fares along the dyke on its northern side; and the tall white tower of Dolo[1] is seen trembling in the heat mist far away, and never seems nearer than it did at first. Presently, you pass one of the much vaunted "villas on the Brenta[2]": a glaring, spectral shell of brick and stucco, its windows with painted architraves like picture-frames, and a court-yard paved with pebbles in front of it, all burning in the thick glow of the feverish sunshine, but fenced from the high road, for magnificence' sake, with goodly posts and chains; then another, of Kew Gothic[3], with Chinese

[1] A small town between Padua and Venice.

[2] The Brenta flows from the Tyrol past Padua into the lagoon at Venice. Many wealthy Venetians built their villas on its banks.

[3] There are several modern Gothic villas at Kew, and a Chinese pagoda in the Gardens.

variations, painted red and green; a third composed for the greater part of dead wall, with fictitious windows painted upon it, each with a pea-green blind, and a classical architrave in bad perspective; and a fourth, with stucco figures set on the top of its garden-wall: some antique, like the kind to be seen at the corner of the New Road[1], and some of clumsy grotesque dwarfs, with fat bodies and large boots. This is the architecture to which her studies of the Renaissance have conducted modern Italy.

The sun climbs steadily, and warms into intense white the walls of the little piazza of Dolo, where we change horses. Another dreary stage among the now divided branches of the Brenta, forming irregular and half-stagnant canals; with one or two more villas on the other side of them, but these of the old Venetian type, which we may have recognized before at Padua, and sinking fast into utter ruin, black, and rent, and lonely, set close to the edge of the dull water, with what were once small gardens beside them, kneaded into mud, and with blighted fragments of gnarled hedges and broken stakes from their fencing; and here and there a few fragments of marble steps, which have once given them graceful access from the water's edge, now setting into the mud in broken joints, all aslope, and slippery with green weed. At last the road turns sharply to the north, and there is an open space covered with bent grass, on the right of it: but do not look that way.

Five minutes more, and we are in the upper room of the little inn at Mestre[2], glad of a moment's rest in shade. The table is (always, I think) covered with a cloth of nominal white and perennial grey, with plates and glasses at due intervals, and small loaves of a peculiar white bread, made with oil, and more like knots of flour than bread. The view

[1] The Euston Road, formerly called the New Road, where there are several emporiums of statuary.

[2] A village near Venice.

from its balcony is not cheerful: a narrow street, with a solitary brick church and barren campanile on the other side of it: and some conventual buildings, with a few crimson remnants of fresco about their windows: and, between them and the street, a ditch with some slow current in it, and one or two small houses beside it, one with an arbour of roses at its door, as in an English tea-garden; the air, however, about us having in it nothing of roses, but a close smell of garlic and crabs, warmed by the smoke of various stands of hot chestnuts. There is much vociferation also going on beneath the window respecting certain wheelbarrows which are in rivalry for our baggage; we appease their rivalry with our best patience, and follow them down the narrow street.

We have but walked some two hundred yards when we come to a low wharf or quay at the extremity of a canal, with long steps on each side down to the water, which latter we fancy for an instant has become black with stagnation; another glance undeceives us,—it is covered with the black boats of Venice. We enter one of them, rather to try if they be real boats or not, than with any definite purpose, and glide away; at first feeling as if the water were yielding continually beneath the boat and letting her sink into soft vacancy. It is something clearer than any water we have seen lately, and of a pale green; the banks only two or three feet above it, of mud and rank grass, with here and there a stunted tree; gliding swiftly past the small casement of the gondola, as if they were dragged by upon a painted scene.

Stroke by stroke, we count the plunges of the oar, each heaving up the side of the boat slightly as her silver beak shoots forward. We lose patience, and extricate ourselves from the cushions: the sea air blows keenly by, as we stand leaning on the roof of the floating cell. In front, nothing to be seen but long canal and level bank; to the west, the

tower of Mestre is lowering fast, and behind it there have risen purple shades, of the colour of dead rose-leaves, all round the horizon, feebly defined against the afternoon sky,—the Alps of Bassano[1]! Forward still: the endless canal bends at last, and then breaks into intricate angles about some low bastions, now torn to pieces and staggering in ugly rents towards the water,—the bastions of the fort of Malghera[2]. Another turn, and another perspective of canal; but not interminable. The silver beak cleaves it fast, —it widens: the rank grass of the banks sinks lower, and lower, and at last dies in tawny knots along an expanse of weedy shore. Over it, on the right, but a few years back, we might have seen the lagoon stretching to the horizon, and the warm southern sky bending over Malamocco[3] to the sea. Now we can see nothing but what seems a low and monotonous dockyard wall, with flat arches to let the tide through it;—this is the railroad bridge, conspicuous above all things. But at the end of those dismal arches there rises, out of the wide water, a straggling line of low and confused brick buildings, which, but for the many towers which are mingled among them, might be the suburbs of an English manufacturing town. Four or five domes, pale, and apparently at a greater distance, rise over the centre of the line; but the object which first catches the eye is a sullen cloud of black smoke brooding over the northern half of it, and which issues from the belfry of a church.

It is Venice.

1 30 miles north-west of Venice.
2 A fort, close to the railway, besieged in 1849.
3 A village on the island of the Lido, which lies off Venice.

VENICE

AS PAINTED BY CANALETTI, PROUT, STANFIELD AND TURNER

Modern Painters (1). Vol. III, pp. 255–257.

I MAY, perhaps, illustrate my meaning more completely by a comparison of the kind of truths impressed upon us in the painting of Venice by Canaletti[1], Prout[2], Stanfield[3], and Turner[4].

The effect of a fine Canaletti is, in its first impression, dioramic. We fancy we are in our beloved Venice again, with one foot, by mistake, in the clear, invisible film of water lapping over the marble steps of the foreground. Every house has its proper relief against the sky—every brick and stone its proper hue of sunlight and shade—and every degree of distance its proper tone of retiring air. Presently, however, we begin to feel that it is lurid and gloomy, and that the painter, compelled by the lowness of the utmost light at his disposal to deepen the shadows, in order to get the right relation, has lost the flashing, dazzling, exulting light, which was one of our chief sources of Venetian happiness. But we pardon this, knowing it to be unavoidable, and begin to look for something of that in which Venice differs from Rotterdam, or any other city built beside canals. We know that house, certainly; we never passed it without stopping our gondolier, for its ara-

1 Antonio Canaletto (1697–1768) and his nephew Bernardo Bellotto (1720–1780), painters of Venetian and Roman scenes. The usual spelling is Canaletto.

2 Samuel Prout (1782–1852), painter of architectural subjects.

3 Clarkson Stanfield (1794–1867), marine painter.

4 Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), landscape-painter and etcher. Ruskin subsequently arranged and catalogued his sketches for the National Gallery.

besques were as rich as a bank of flowers in spring, and as beautiful as a dream. What has Canaletti given us for them? Five black dots. Well; take the next house. We remember that too; it was mouldering inch by inch into the canal, and the bricks had fallen away from its shattered marble shafts, and left them white and skeleton-like; yet, with their fretwork of cold flowers wreathed about them still, untouched by time, and through the rents of the wall behind them there used to come long sunbeams, greened by the weeds through which they pierced, which flitted and fell, one by one, round those grey and quiet shafts, catching here a leaf and there a leaf and gliding over the illumined edges and delicate fissures, until they sank into the deep dark hollow between the marble blocks of the sunk foundation, lighting every other moment one isolated emerald lamp on the crest of the intermittent waves, when the wild sea-weeds and crimson lichens drifted and crawled with their thousand colours and fine branches over its decay, and the black, clogging, accumulated limpets hung in ropy clusters from the dripping and tinkling stone. What has Canaletti given us for this? One square red mass, composed of—let me count—five-and-fifty, no; six-and-fifty, no; I was right at first—five-and-fifty bricks, of precisely the same size, shape, and colour, one great black line for the shadow of the roof at the top, and six similar ripples in a row at the bottom! And this is what people call "painting nature"! It is, indeed, painting nature—as she appears to the most unfeeling and untaught of mankind. The bargeman and the bricklayer probably see no more in Venice than Canaletti gives—heaps of earth and mortar, with water between—and are just as capable of appreciating the facts of sunlight and shadow, by which he deceives us, as the most educated of us all. But what more there is in Venice than brick and stone—what there is of mystery and death, and memory and beauty—what there is to be

learned or lamented, to be loved or wept—we look for to Canaletti in vain.

Let us pass to Prout. The imitation is lost at once. The buildings have nothing resembling their real relief against the sky; there are multitudes of false distances; the shadows in many places have a great deal more Vandyke-brown than darkness in them; and the lights very often more yellow-ochre than sunshine. But yet the effect on our eye is that very brilliancy and cheerfulness which delighted us in Venice itself, and there is none of that oppressive and lurid gloom which was cast upon our feelings by Canaletti. And now we feel there is something in the subject worth drawing, and different from other subjects and architecture. That house is rich, and strange, and full of grotesque carving and character—that one next to it is shattered and infirm, and varied with picturesque rents and hues of decay —that farther off is beautiful in proportion, and strong in its purity of marble. Now we begin to feel that we are in Venice; this is what we could not get elsewhere; it is worth seeing, and drawing, and talking and thinking of,— not an exhibition of common daylight or brick walls. But let us look a little closer; we know those capitals very well; their design was most original and perfect, and so delicate that it seemed to have been cut in ivory;—what have we got for them here? Five straight strokes of a reed pen! No, Mr Prout, it is not quite Venice yet.

Let us take Stanfield then. Now we are farther still from anything like Venetian tone; all is cold and comfortless, but there is air and good daylight, and we will not complain. And now let us look into the buildings, and all is perfection and fidelity; every shade and line full of feeling and truth, rich and solid, and substantial stone; every leaf and arabesque marked to its minutest curve and angle,—the marble crumbling, the wood mouldering, and the waves splashing and lapping before our eyes. But it is all drawn hard and

sharp, there is nothing to hope for or find out, nothing to dream of or discover; we can measure and see it from base to battlement, there is nothing too fine for us to follow, nothing too full for us to fathom. This cannot be nature, for it is not infinity. No, Mr Stanfield, it is scarcely Venice yet.

But let us take, with Turner, the last and greatest step of all. Thank heaven, we are in sunshine again,—and what sunshine! Not the lurid, gloomy, plague-like oppression of Canaletti, but white, flashing fulness of dazzling light, which the waves drink and the clouds breathe, bounding and burning in intensity of joy. That sky,—it is a very visible infinity,—liquid, measureless, unfathomable, panting and melting through the chasms in the long fields of snow-white, flaked, slow-moving vapour, that guide the eye along their multitudinous waves down to the islanded rest of the Euganean hills. Do we dream, or does the white forked sail drift nearer, and nearer yet, diminishing the blue sea between us with the fulness of its wings? It pauses now; but the quivering of its bright reflection troubles the shadows of the sea, those azure, fathomless depths of crystal mystery, on which the swiftness of the poised gondola floats double, its black beak lifted like the crest of a dark ocean bird, its scarlet draperies flashed back from the kindling surface, and its bent oar breaking the radiant water into a dust of gold. Dreamlike and dim, but glorious, the unnumbered palaces lift their shafts out of the hollow sea,—pale ranks of motionless flame,—their mighty towers sent up to heaven like tongues of more eager fire,—their grey domes looming vast and dark, like eclipsed worlds,—their sculptured arabesques and purple marble fading farther and fainter, league beyond league, lost in the light of distance. Detail after detail, thought beyond thought, you find and feel them through the radiant mystery, inexhaustible as indistinct, beautiful, but never all revealed; secret

in fulness, confused in symmetry, as nature herself is to the bewildered and foiled glance, giving out of that indistinctness, and through that confusion, the perpetual newness of the infinite, and the beautiful.

Yes, Mr Turner, we are in Venice now.

VENICE

Stones of Venice (2). Vol. x, pp. 12–15.

The average rise and fall of the tide is about three feet (varying considerably with the seasons); but this fall, on so flat a shore, is enough to cause continual movement in the waters, and in the main canals to produce a reflux which frequently runs like a mill stream. At high water no land is visible for many miles to the north or south of Venice, except in the form of small islands crowned with towers or gleaming with villages: there is a channel, some three miles wide, between the city and the mainland, and some mile and a half wide between it and the sandy breakwater called the Lido, which divides the lagoon from the Adriatic, but which is so low as hardly to disturb the impression of the city's having been built in the midst of the ocean, although the secret of its true position is partly, yet not painfully, betrayed by the clusters of piles set to mark the deep-water channels, which undulate far away in spotty chains like the studded backs of huge sea-snakes, and by the quick glittering of the crisped and crowded waves that flicker and dance before the strong winds upon the uplifted level of the shallow sea. But the scene is widely different at low tide. A fall of eighteen or twenty inches is enough to show ground over the greater part of the lagoon; and at the complete ebb the city is seen standing in the midst

of a dark plain of sea-weed, of gloomy green, except only where the larger branches of the Brenta and its associated streams converge towards the port of the Lido. Through this salt and sombre plain the gondola and the fishing-boat advance by tortuous channels, seldom more than four or five feet deep, and often so choked with slime that the heavier keels furrow the bottom till their crossing tracts are seen through the clear sea water like the ruts upon a wintry road, and the oar leaves blue gashes upon the ground at every stroke, or is entangled among the thick weed that fringes the banks with the weight of its sullen waves, leaning to and fro upon the uncertain sway of the exhausted tide. The scene is often profoundly oppressive, even at this day, when every plot of higher ground bears some fragment of fair building: but, in order to know what it was once, let the traveller follow in his boat at evening the windings of some unfrequented channel far into the midst of the melancholy plain; let him remove, in his imagination, the brightness of the great city that still extends itself in the distance, and the walls and towers from the islands that are near; and so wait, until the bright investiture and sweet warmth of the sunset are withdrawn from the waters, and the black desert of their shore lies in its nakedness beneath the night, pathless, comfortless, infirm, lost in dark languor and fearful silence, except where the salt runlets plash into the tideless pools, or the sea-birds flit from their margins with a questioning cry; and he will be enabled to enter in some sort into the horror of heart with which this solitude was anciently chosen by man for his habitation. They little thought, who first drove the stakes into the sand, and strewed the ocean reeds for their rest, that their children were to be the princes of that ocean, and their palaces its pride; and yet, in the great natural laws that rule that sorrowful wilderness, let it be remembered what strange preparation had been made for the things which no human

imagination could have foretold, and how the whole existence and fortune of the Venetian nation were anticipated or compelled, by the setting of those bars and doors to the rivers and the sea. Had deeper currents divided their islands, hostile navies would again and again have reduced the rising city into servitude; had stronger surges beaten their shores, all the richness and refinement of the Venetian architecture must have been exchanged for the walls and bulwarks of an ordinary seaport. Had there been no tide, as in other parts of the Mediterranean, the narrow canals of the city would have become noisome, and the marsh in which it was built pestiferous. Had the tide been only a foot or eighteen inches higher in its rise, the water-access to the doors of the palaces would have been impossible: even as it is, there is sometimes a little difficulty, at the ebb, in landing without setting foot upon the lower and slippery steps; and the highest tides sometimes enter the courtyards, and overflow the entrance halls. Eighteen inches more of difference between the level of the flood and ebb would have rendered the doorsteps of every palace, at low water, a treacherous mass of weeds and limpets, and the entire system of water-carriage for the higher classes, in their easy and daily intercourse, must have been done away with. The streets of the city would have been widened, its network of canals filled up, and all the peculiar character of the place and the people destroyed.

The reader may perhaps have felt some pain in the contrast between this faithful view of the site of the Venetian Throne, and the romantic conception of it which we ordinarily form: but this pain, if he have felt it, ought to be more than counterbalanced by the value of the instance thus afforded to us at once of the inscrutableness and the wisdom of the ways of God. If, two thousand years ago, we had been permitted to watch the slow settling of the slime of those turbid rivers into the polluted sea, and the

gaining upon its deep and fresh waters of the lifeless, impassable, unvoyageable plain, how little could we have understood the purpose with which those islands were shaped out of the void, and the torpid waters enclosed with their desolate walls of sand! How little could we have known, any more than of what now seems to us most distressful, dark, and objectless, the glorious aim which was then in the mind of Him in whose hands are all the corners of the earth[1]! how little imagined that in the laws which were stretching forth the gloomy margins of those fruitless banks, and feeding the bitter grass among their shallows, there was indeed a preparation, and *the only preparation possible*, for the founding of a city which was to be set like a golden clasp on the girdle of the earth, to write her history on the white scrolls of the sea-surges, and to word it in their thunder, and to gather and give forth, in world-wide pulsation the glory of the West and of the East, from the burning heart of her Fortitude and Splendour!

ST MARK'S, VENICE

Stones of Venice (2). Vol. x, pp. 78–85.

And now I wish that the reader, before I bring him into St Mark's Place, would imagine himself for a little time in a quiet English cathedral town, and walk with me to the west front of its cathedral[2]. Let us go together up the more retired street, at the end of which we can see the pinnacles of one of the towers, and then through the low grey gateway, with its battlemented top and small latticed window in the centre, into the inner private-looking road

[1] Ps. xcv. 4 (P.B. version).
[2] This is supposed to be Canterbury, or perhaps Salisbury.

or close, where nothing goes in but the carts of the tradesmen who supply the bishop and the chapter, and where there are little shaven grass-plots, fenced in by neat rails, before old-fashioned groups of somewhat diminutive and excessively trim houses, with little oriel and bay windows jutting out here and there, and deep wooden cornices and eaves painted cream colour and white, and small porches to their doors in the shape of cockleshells, or little, crooked, thick indescribable wooden gables warped a little on one side; and so forward till we come to larger houses, also old-fashioned, but of red brick, and with garden behind them, and fruit walls, which show here and there, among the nectarines, the vestiges of an old cloister arch or shaft, and looking in front on the cathedral square itself, laid out in rigid divisions of smooth grass and gravel walk, yet not uncheerful, especially on the sunny side, where the canon's children are walking with their nurserymaids. And so, taking care not to tread on the grass, we will go along the straight walk to the west front, and there stand for a time, looking up at its deep-pointed porches and the dark places between their pillars where there were statues once, and where the fragments, here and there, of a stately figure are still left, which has in it the likeness of a king, perhaps indeed a king on earth, perhaps a saintly king long ago in heaven; and so higher and higher up to the great mouldering wall of rugged sculpture and confused arcades, shattered and grey, and grisly with heads of dragons and mocking fiends, worn by the rain and swirling winds into yet unseemlier shape, and coloured on their stony scales by the deep russet-orange lichen[1], melancholy gold; and so, higher still, to the bleak towers, so far above that the eye loses

[1] Alas! all this was described from things now never to be seen more. Read, for "the great mouldering wall," and the context of four lines, "the beautiful new parapet by Mr Scott, with a gross of kings sent down from Kensington." Note added by Ruskin in 1879.

itself among the bosses of their traceries, though they are rude and strong, and only sees like a drift of eddying black points, now closing, now scattering, and now settling suddenly into invisible places among the bosses and flowers, the crowd of restless birds that fill the whole square with that strange clangour of theirs, so harsh and yet so soothing, like the cries of birds on a solitary coast between the cliffs and sea.

Think for a little while of that scene, and the meaning of all its small formalisms, mixed with its serene sublimity. Estimate its secluded, continuous, drowsy felicities, and its evidence of the sense and steady performance of such kind of duties as can be regulated by the cathedral clock; and weigh the influence of those dark towers on all who have passed through the lonely square at their feet for centuries, and on all who have seen them rising far away over the wooded plain, or catching on their square masses the last rays of the sunset, when the city at their feet was indicated only by the mist at the bend of the river. And then let us quickly recollect that we are in Venice, and land at the extremity of the Calle Lunga San Moise[1], which may be considered as there answering to the secluded street that led us to our English cathedral gateway.

We find ourselves in a paved alley, some seven feet wide where it is widest, full of people, and resonant with cries of itinerant salesmen,—a shriek in their beginning, and dying away into a kind of brazen ringing, all the worse for its confinement between the high houses of the passage along which we have to make our way. Overhead, an inextricable confusion of rugged shutters, and iron balconies and chimney flues, pushed out on brackets to save room, and arched windows with projecting sills of Istrian stone, and gleams of green leaves here and there where a

[1] Now rebuilt, and called Calle Larga XXII Marzo, in commemoration of the Venetian Republic of 1848.

fig-tree branch escapes over a lower wall from some inner cortile[1], leading the eye up to the narrow stream of blue sky high over all. On each side, a row of shops, as densely set as may be, occupying, in fact, intervals between the square stone shafts, about eight feet high, which carry the first floors: intervals of which one is narrow and serves as a door; the other is, in the more respectable shops, wainscotted to the height of the counter and glazed above, but in those of the poorer tradesmen left open to the ground, and the wares laid on benches and tables in the open air, the light in all cases entering at the front only, and fading away in a few feet from the threshold into a gloom which the eye from without cannot penetrate, but which is generally broken by a ray or two from a feeble lamp at the back of the shop, suspended before a print of the Virgin. The less pious shopkeeper sometimes leaves his lamp unlighted, and is contented with a penny print; the more religious one has his print coloured and set in a little shrine with a gilded or figured fringe, with perhaps a faded flower or two on each side, and his lamp burning brilliantly. Here, at the fruiterer's, where the dark-green water-melons are heaped upon the counter like cannon balls, the Madonna has a tabernacle of fresh laurel leaves; but the pewterer next door has let his lamp out, and there is nothing to be seen in his shop but the dull gleam of the studded patterns on the copper pans, hanging from his roof in the darkness. Next comes a "Vendita Frittole e Liquori[2]," where the Virgin enthroned in a very humble manner beside a tallow candle on a back shelf, presides over certain ambrosial morsels of a nature too ambiguous to be defined or enumerated. But a few steps farther on, at the regular wine-shop of the calle, where we are offered "Vino Nostrani a Soldi 28·32[3]," the Madonna is in great

[1] Courtyard.

[2] Fried food and liquors.

[3] Nostrani wine at 28·32 Soldi.

glory enthroned above ten or a dozen large red casks of three-year-old vintage, and flanked by goodly ranks of bottles of Maraschino, and two crimson lamps; and for the evening, when the gondoliers will come to drink out, under her auspices, the money that have gained during the day, she will have a whole chandelier.

A yard or two farther, we pass the hostelry of the Black Eagle, and glancing as we pass through the square door of marble, deeply moulded, in the outer wall, we see the shadows of its pergola of vines resting on an ancient well, with a pointed shield carved on its side; and so presently emerge on the bridge and Campo San Moise, whence to the entrance into St Mark's Place, called the Bocca di Piazza (mouth of the square), the Venetian character is nearly destroyed, first by the frightful façade of San Moise, which we will pause at another time to examine, and then by the modernizing of the shops as they near the piazza, and the mingling with the lower Venetian populace of lounging groups of English and Austrians. We will push fast through them into the shadow of the pillars at the end of the "Bocca di Piazza," and then we forget them all; for between those pillars there opens a great light, and, in the midst of it, as we advance slowly, the vast tower of St Mark seems to lift itself visibly forth from the level field of chequered stones; and, on each side, the countless arches prolong themselves into ranged symmetry, as if the rugged and irregular houses that pressed together above us in the dark alley had been struck back into sudden obedience and lovely order, and all their rude casements and broken walls had been transformed into arches charged with goodly sculpture, and fluted shafts of delicate stone.

And well may they fall back, for beyond those troops of ordered arches there rises a vision out of the earth, and all the great square seems to have opened from it in a kind of awe, that we may see it far away;—a multitude of pillars

and white domes, clustered into a long low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure-heap, it seems, partly of gold, and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster, clear as amber and delicate as ivory,—sculpture fantastic and involved, of palm leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together into an endless network of buds and plumes; and in the midst of it, the solemn forms of angels, sceptred, and robed to the feet, and leaning to each other across the gates, their figures indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago. And round the walls of the porches there are set pillars of variegated stones, jasper and porphyry and deep-green serpentine spotted with flakes of snow, and marbles, that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like, "their bluest veins to kiss[1]"—the shadow, as it steals back from them, revealing line after line of azure undulation, as a receding tide leaves the waved sand; their capitals rich with interwoven tracery, rooted knots of herbage, and drifting leaves of acanthus and vine, and mystical signs, all beginning and ending in the Cross; and above them, in the broad archivolts, a continuous chain of language and of life—angels, and the signs of heaven, and the labours of men, each in its appointed season upon the earth; and above these, another range of glittering pinnacles, mixed with white arches edged with scarlet flowers,—a confusion of delight, amidst which the breasts of the Greek horses[2] are seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength,

[1] *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act ii, Sc. 5.

[2] The gilding is now removed. They are four bronze horses, supposed to be of Greek workmanship, standing over the western

and the St Mark's lion, lifted on a blue field covered with stars, until at last, as if in ecstasy, the crests of the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore had been frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst.

Between that grim cathedral of England and this, what an interval! There is a type of it in the very birds that haunt them; for, instead of the restless crowd, hoarse-voiced and sable-winged, drifting on the bleak upper air, the St Mark's porches are full of doves, that nestle among the marble foliage, and mingle the soft iridescence of their living plumes, changing at every motion, with the tints, hardly less lovely, that have stood unchanged for seven hundred years.

And what effect has this splendour on those who pass beneath it? You may walk from sunrise to sunset, to and fro, before the gateway of St Mark's, and you will not see an eye lifted to it, nor a countenance brightened by it. Priest and layman, soldier and civilian, rich and poor, pass by it alike regardlessly. Up to the very recesses of the porches, the meanest tradesmen of the city push their counters; nay, the foundations of its pillars are themselves the seats—not "of them that sell doves[1]" for sacrifice, but of the vendors of toys and caricatures. Round the whole square in front of the church there is almost a continuous line of cafés, where the idle Venetians of the middle classes lounge, and read empty journals; in its centre the Austrian bands play during the time of vespers, their martial music jarring with the organ notes,—the march drowning the

porch. They were sent to Venice from Constantinople, when the city was taken in 1204 in the Fourth Crusade. Napoleon took them to Paris in 1797, but they were restored after the battle of Waterloo.

[1] Matthew xxi. 12.

miserere, and the sullen crowd thickening round them,—a crowd, which, if it had its will, would stiletto every soldier that pipes to it[1]. And in the recesses of the porches, all day long, knots of men of the lowest classes, unemployed and listless, lie basking in the sun like lizards; and unregarded children,—every heavy glance of their young eyes full of desperation and stony depravity, and their throats hoarse with cursing,—gamble, and fight, and snarl, and sleep, hour after hour, clashing their bruised centesimi upon the marble ledges of the church porch. And the images of Christ and His angels look down upon it continually.

THE INTERIOR OF ST MARK'S, VENICE

Stones of Venice (2). Vol. x, pp. 88–89.

THROUGH the heavy door whose bronze network closes the place of his rest, let us enter the church itself. It is lost in still deeper twilight, to which the eye must be accustomed for some moments before the form of the building can be traced; and then there opens before us a vast cave, hewn out into the form of a Cross, and divided into shadowy aisles by many pillars. Round the domes of its roof the light enters only through narrow apertures like large stars; and here and there a ray or two from some far-away casement wanders into the darkness, and casts a narrow phosphoric stream upon the waves of marble that heave and fall in a thousand colours along the floor. What else there is of light is from torches, or silver lamps, burning

[1] When this passage was written, Venice was occupied by the Austrians.

ceaselessly in the recesses of the chapels; the roof sheeted with gold, and the polished walls covered with alabaster, give back at every curve and angle some feeble gleaming to the flames; and the glories round the heads of the sculptured saints flash out upon us as we pass them, and sink again into the gloom. Under foot and over head, a continual succession of crowded imagery,one picture passing into another, as in a dream; forms beautiful and terrible mixed together; dragons and serpents, and ravening beasts of prey, and graceful birds that in the midst of them drink from running fountains and feed from vases of crystal; the passions and the pleasures of human life symbolized together, and the mystery of its redemption; for the mazes of interwoven lines and changeful pictures lead always at last to the Cross, lifted and carved in every place and upon every stone; sometimes with the serpent of eternity wrapt round it, sometimes with doves beneath its arms, and sweet herbage growing forth from its feet; but conspicuous most of all on the great rood that crosses the church before the altar, raised in bright blazonry against the shadow of the apse. And although in the recesses of the aisles and chapels, when the mist of the incense hangs heavily, we may see continually a figure traced in faint lines upon their marble, a woman standing with her eyes raised to heaven, and the inscription above her, "Mother of God," she is not here the presiding deity. It is the Cross that is first seen, and always, burning in the centre of the temple; and every dome and hollow of its roof has the figure of Christ in the utmost height of it, raised in power, or returning in judgment.

WORKING DAYS IN ITALY

Praeterita (2). Vol. xxxv, pp. 355–358.

In summer I have been always at work, or out walking, by six o'clock, usually awake by half-past four; but I keep to Pisa for the present, where my monkish discipline arranged itself thus. Out, anyhow, by six, quick walk to the field, and as much done as I could, and back to breakfast at half-past eight. Steady bit of Sismondi[1] over bread and butter, then back to Campo Santo, draw till twelve; quick walk to look about me and stretch my legs, in shade if it might be, before lunch, on anything I chanced to see nice in a fruit shop, and a bit of bread. Back to lighter work, or merely looking and thinking, for another hour and a half, and to hotel for dinner at four. Three courses and a flask of Aleatico (a sweet, yet rather astringent, red, rich for Italian, wine—provincial, and with lovely basket-work round the bottle). Then out for saunter with Couttet[2]; he having leave to say anything he had a mind to, but not generally communicative of his feelings; he carried my sketch-book, but in the evening there was too much always to be hunted out, of city; or watched, of hills, or sunset; and I rarely drew,—to my sorrow, now. I wish I knew less, and had drawn more.

Homewards, from wherever we had got to, the moment the sun was down, and the last clouds had lost their colour. I avoided marshy places, if I could, at all times of the day, because I didn't like them; but I feared neither sun nor moon, dawn nor twilight, malaria nor anything else malefic, in the course of work, except only draughts and ugly people I never would sit in a draught for half a minute, and fled

[1] *History of the Italian Republics of the Middle Ages.*

[2] Ruskin's Swiss guide, who accompanied him on many expeditions.

from some sorts of beggars; but a crowd of the common people round me only made me proud, and try to draw as well as I could; mere rags or dirt I did not care an atom for.

As early as 1835, and as late as 1841, I had been accustomed, both in France and Italy, to feel that the crowd behind me was interested in my choice of subjects, and pleasantly applausive of the swift progress under my hand of street perspectives, and richness of surface decoration, such as might be symbolized by dextrous zigzags, emphatic dots, or graceful flourishes. I had the better pleasure, now, of feeling that my really watchful delineation, while still rapid enough to interest any stray student of drawing who might stop by me on his way to the Academy, had a quite unusual power of directing the attention of the general crowd to points of beauty, or subjects of sculpture, in the buildings I was at work on, to which they had never before lifted eyes, and which I had the double pride of first discovering for them, and then imitating—not to their dissatisfaction.

And well might I be proud; but how much more ought I to have been pitiful, in feeling the swift and perfect sympathy which the "common people"—companion-people I should have said, for in Italy there is no commonness—gave me in Lucca, or Florence, or Venice, for every touch of true work that I laid in their sight. How much more, I say, should it have been pitiful to me, to recognize their eager intellect, and delicate senses, open to every lesson and every joy of their ancestral art, far more deeply and vividly than in the days when every spring kindled them into battle, and every autumn was red with their blood: yet left now, alike by the laws and lords set over them, less happy in aimless life than of old in sudden death; never one effort made to teach them, to comfort them, to economize their industries, animate their pleasures, or guard

their simplest rights from the continually more fatal oppression of unprincipled avarice, and unmerciful wealth.

But all this I have felt and learned, like so much else, too late. The extreme seclusion of my early training left me long careless of sympathy for myself; and that which I gave to others never led me into any hope of being useful to them, till my strength of active life was past. Also, my mind was not yet catholic enough to feel that the Campo Santo[1] belonged to its own people more than to me; and indeed, I had to read its lessons before I could interpret them. The world has for the most part been of opinion that I entered on the task of philanthropy too soon rather than too late: at all events, my conscience remained at rest during all those first times at Pisa, in mere delight in the glory of the past, and in hope for the future of Italy, without need of my becoming one of her demagogues. And the days that began in the cloister of the Campo Santo usually ended by my getting upon the roof of Santa Maria della Spina, and sitting in the sunlight that transfused the warm marble of its pinnacles, till the unabated brightness went down beyond the arches of the Ponte-a-Mare,—the few footsteps and voices of the twilight fell silent in the streets, and the city and her mountains stood mute as a dream, beyond the soft eddying of Arno.

GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE

Stones of Venice (2). Vol. x, pp. 237–239.

I HAVE before alluded to the strange and vain supposition, that the original conception of Gothic architecture had been derived from vegetation,—from the symmetry of

[1] The cemetery, with its mediaeval cloister.

avenues, and the interlacing of branches. It is a supposition which never could have existed for a moment in the mind of any person acquainted with early Gothic; but, however idle as a theory, it is most valuable as a testimony to the character of the perfected style. It is precisely because the reverse of this theory is the fact, because the Gothic did not arise out of, but develope itself into, a resemblance to vegetation, that this resemblance is so instructive as an indication of the temper of the builders. It was no chance suggestion of the form of an arch from the bending of a bough, but a gradual and continual discovery of a beauty in natural forms which could be more and more perfectly transferred into those of stone, that influenced at once the heart of the people, and the form of the edifice. The Gothic architecture arose in massy and mountainous strength, axe-hewn, and iron-bound, block heaved upon block by the monk's enthusiasm and the soldier's force; and cramped and stanchioned into such weight of grisly wall, as might bury the anchoret in darkness, and beat back the utmost storm of battle, suffering but by the same narrow crosslet the passing of the sunbeam, or of the arrow. Gradually, as that monkish enthusiasm became more thoughtful, and as the sound of war became more and more intermittent beyond the gates of the convent or the keep, the stony pillar grew slender and the vaulted roof grew light, till they had wreathed themselves into the semblance of the summer woods at their fairest, and of the dead field-flowers, long trodden down in blood, sweet monumental statues were set to bloom for ever, beneath the porch of the temple, or the canopy of the tomb.

Nor is it only as a sign of greater gentleness or refinement of mind, but as a proof of the best possible direction of this refinement, that the tendency of the Gothic to the expression of vegetative life is to be admired. That sentence

of Genesis, "I have given thee every green herb for meat[1]," like all the rest of the book, has a profound symbolical as well as a literal meaning. It is not merely the nourishment of the body, but the food of the soul, that is intended. The green herb is, of all nature, that which is most essential to the healthy spiritual life of man. Most of us do not need fine scenery; the precipice and the mountain peak are not intended to be seen by all men,—perhaps their power is greatest over those who are unaccustomed to them. But trees and fields and flowers were made for all, and are necessary for all. God has connected the labour which is essential to the bodily sustenance with the pleasures which are healthiest for the heart; and while He made the ground stubborn, He made its herbage fragrant, and its blossoms fair. The proudest architecture that man can build has no higher honour than to bear the image and recall the memory of that grass of the field which is, at once, the type and the support of his existence; the goodly building is then most glorious when it is sculptured into the likeness of the leaves of Paradise; and the great Gothic spirit, as we showed it to be noble in its disquietude, is also noble in its hold of nature; it is, indeed, like the dove of Noah, in that she found no rest upon the face of the waters,—but like her in this also, "Lo, IN HER MOUTH WAS AN OLIVE BRANCH, PLUCKED OFF[2]."

TOMBS

Stones of Venice (3). Vol. XI, pp. 109–114.

THE most significant change in the treatment of these tombs, with respect to our immediate object, is in the form of the sarcophagus. It was above noted that, exactly in proportion to the degree of the pride of life expressed in

[1] Genesis i. 30. [2] Genesis viii. –11.

any monument, would be also the fear of death; and therefore, as these tombs increase in splendour, in size, and beauty of workmanship, we perceive a gradual desire to *take away from the definite character of the sarcophagus.* In the earliest times, as we have seen, it was a gloomy mass of stone; gradually it became charged with religious sculpture; but never with the slightest desire to disguise its form, until towards the middle of the fifteenth century. It then becomes enriched with flower-work and hidden by the Virtues; and, finally, losing its four-square form, it is modelled on graceful types of ancient vases, made as little like a coffin as possible, and refined away in various elegances, till it becomes, at last, a mere pedestal or stage for the portrait statue. This statue, in the meantime, has been gradually coming back to life, through a curious series of transitions. The Vendramin monument[1] is one of the last which shows, or pretends to show, the recumbent figure laid in death. A few years later, this idea became disagreeable to polite minds; and, lo! the figures, which before had been laid at rest upon the tomb pillow, raised themselves on their elbows, and began to look round them. The soul of the sixteenth century dared not contemplate its body in death....

The statue, however, did not long remain in this partially recumbent attitude. Even the expression of peace became painful to the frivolous and thoughtless Italians, and they required the portraiture to be rendered in a manner that should induce no memory of death. The statue rose up, and presented itself in front of the tomb, like an actor upon the stage, surrounded now not merely, or not at all, by the Virtues, but by allegorical figures of Fame and Victory, by genii and muses, by personifications of humbled kingdoms and adoring nations, and by every circumstance of

[1] Most celebrated monument of this period to the Doge Andrea Vendramin in the Church of SS. John and Paul; erected about 1480.

pomp, and symbol of adulation, that flattery could suggest, or insolence could claim....

In a dark niche in the outer wall of the outer corridor of St Mark's—not even in the church, observe, but in the atrium or porch of it, and on the north side of the church,—is a solid sarcophagus of white marble, raised only about two feet from the ground on four stunted square pillars. Its lid is a mere slab of stone; on its extremities are sculptured two crosses; in front of it are two rows of rude figures, the uppermost representing Christ with the Apostles; the lower row is of six figures only, alternately male and female, holding up their hands in the usual attitude of benediction: the sixth is smaller than the rest, and the midmost of the other five has a glory round its head. I cannot tell the meaning of these figures, but between them are suspended censers attached to crosses: a most beautiful symbolic expression of Christ's mediatorial function. The whole is surrounded by a rude wreath of vine leaves, proceeding out of the foot of a cross.

On the bar of marble which separates the two rows of figures are inscribed these words:

"Here lies the Lord Marin Morosini, Duke."

It is the tomb of the Doge Marino Morosini, who reigned from 1249 to 1252.

From before this rude and solemn sepulchre let us pass to the southern aisle of the church of St John and Paul; and there, towering from the pavement to the vaulting of the church, behold a mass of marble, sixty or seventy feet in height, of mingled yellow and white, the yellow carved into the form of an enormous curtain, with ropes, fringes, and tassels, sustained by cherubs; in front of which, in the now usual stage attitudes, advance the statues of the Doge Bertuccio Valier, his son the Doge Silvester Valier, and his son's wife, Elisabeth[1]. The statues of the Doges,

[1] Bertuccio Valier was Doge 1656–1658, during the war with the Turks.

though mean and Polonius-like, are partly redeemed by the Ducal robes; but that of the Dogaressa is a consummation of grossness, vanity, and ugliness,—the figure of a large and wrinkled woman, with elaborate curls in stiff projection round her face, covered from her shoulders to her feet with ruffs, furs, lace, jewels, and embroidery. Beneath and around are scattered Virtues, Victories, Fames, genii,—the entire company of the monumental stage assembled, as before a drop scene, executed by various sculptors, and deserving attentive study as exhibiting every condition of false taste and feeble conception. The Victory in the centre is peculiarly interesting; the lion by which she is accompanied, springing on a dragon, has been intended to look terrible, but the incapable sculptor could not conceive any form of dreadfulness, could not even make the lion look angry. It looks only lachrymose; and its lifted forepaws, there being no spring nor motion in its body, give it the appearance of a dog begging.

THE ARTIST'S WORK

Stones of Venice (3). Vol. XI, pp. 212–215.

ALL great art is the work of the whole living creature, body and soul, and chiefly of the soul. But it is not only *the work* of the whole creature, it likewise *addresses* the whole creature. That in which the perfect being speaks must also have the perfect being to listen. I am not to spend my utmost spirit, and give all my strength and life to my work, while you, spectator or hearer, will give me only the attention of half your soul. You must be all mine, as I am all yours; it is the only condition on which we can meet each other. All your faculties, all that is in you of greatest and best, must be awake in you, or I have no reward. The painter is not to cast the entire treasure

of his human nature into his labour merely to please a part of the beholder: not merely to delight his senses, not merely to amuse his fancy, not merely to beguile him into emotion, not merely to lead him into thought; but to do *all* this. Senses, fancy, feeling, reason, the whole of the beholding spirit, must be stilled in attention or stirred with delight; else the labouring spirit has not done its work well. For observe, it is not merely its *right* to be thus met, face to face, heart to heart; but it is its *duty* to evoke this answering of the other soul: its trumpet call must be so clear, that though the challenge may by dulness or indolence be unanswered, there shall be no error as to the meaning of the appeal; there must be a summons in the work, which it shall be our own fault if we do not obey. We require this of it, we beseech this of it. Most men do not know what is in them till they receive this summons from their fellows: their hearts die within them, sleep settles upon them, the lethargy of the world's miasmata; there is nothing for which they are so thankful as that cry, "Awake, thou that sleepest[1]." And this cry must be most loudly uttered to their noblest faculties; first of all, to the imagination, for that is the most tender, and the soonest struck into numbness by the poisoned air; so that one of the main functions of art, in its service to man, is to rouse the imagination from its palsy, like the angel troubling the Bethesda pool; and the art which does not do this is false to its duty, and degraded in its nature. It is not enough that it be well imagined, it must task the beholder also to imagine well; and this so imperatively, that if he does not choose to rouse himself to meet the work, he shall not taste it, nor enjoy it in any wise. Once that he is well awake, the guidance which the artist gives him should be full and authoritative: the beholder's imagination should not be suffered to take its own way, or wander hither

[1] Ephesians v. 14.

and thither; but neither must it be left at rest; and the right point of realization, for any given work of art, is that which will enable the spectator to complete it for himself, in the exact way the artist would have him, but not that which will save him the trouble of effecting the completion. So soon as the idea is entirely conveyed, the artist's labour should cease; and every touch which he adds beyond the point when, with the help of the beholder's imagination, the story ought to have been told, is a degradation to his work. So that the art is wrong which either realizes its subject completely, or fails in giving such definite aid as shall enable it to be realized by the beholding imagination.

It follows, therefore, that the quantity of finish or detail which may rightly be bestowed upon any work, depends on the number and kind of ideas which the artist wishes to convey, much more than on the amount of realization necessary to enable the imagination to grasp them. It is true that the differences of judgment formed by one or another observer are in great degree dependent on their unequal imaginative powers, as well as their unequal efforts in following the artist's intention; and it constantly happens that the drawing which appears clear to the painter in whose mind the thought is formed, is slightly inadequate to suggest it to the spectator. These causes of false judgment or imperfect achievement must always exist, but they are of no importance. For, in nearly every mind, the imaginative power, however unable to act independently, is so easily helped and so brightly animated by the most obscure suggestion, that there is no form of artistical language which will not readily be seized by it, if once it set itself intelligently to the task; and even without such effort there are few hieroglyphics of which, once understanding that it is to take them as hieroglyphics, it cannot make itself a pleasant picture.

Thus, in the case of all sketches, etchings, unfinished engravings, etc., no one ever supposes them to be imitations. Black outlines on white paper cannot produce a deceptive resemblance of anything; and the mind, understanding at once that it is to depend on its own powers for great part of its pleasure, sets itself so actively to the task that it can completely enjoy the rudest outline in which meaning exists. Now, when it is once in this temper, the artist is infinitely to be blamed who insults it by putting anything into his work which is not suggestive: having summoned the imaginative power, he must turn it to account and keep it employed, or it will turn against him in indignation. Whatever he does merely to realize and substantiate an idea is impertinent; he is like a dull story-teller, dwelling on points which the hearer anticipates or disregards. The imagination will say to him: "I knew all that before; I don't want to be told that. Go on; or be silent, and let me go on in my own way. I can tell the story better than you."

Observe, then, whenever finish is given for the sake of realization, it is wrong; whenever it is given for the sake of adding ideas, it is right. All true finish consists in the addition of ideas, that is to say, in giving the imagination more food; for once well awakened, it is ravenous for food: but the painter who finishes in order to substantiate takes the food out of its mouth, and it will turn and rend him.

THE GREAT ARTIST

Modern Painters (2). Vol. IV, pp. 386–389.

Observe first that a great painter must necessarily be a man of strong and perfect physical constitution. He must be intensely sensitive, active, and vigorous in all powers whatever; gifted especially with a redundant nervous energy,

able to sustain his eye and hand in unbroken continuousness of perception and effort. I do not stay to prove this. It will be found a fact by those who care to enquire into the matter. And this being so, your great painter can only under the most extraordinary circumstances be liable to fits of physical exhaustion or depression, and assuredly he is never liable to any morbid conditions of either; he may be healthily tired when he has worked hard, and will be all right again after he has rationally rested; he may be profoundly vexed, or thrown into fierce passion, but he will never mistake his own vexation for a gloomy state of the universe, nor expect to find consolation or calm by any supernatural help; he will set himself to forget his vexation, and conquer his passion, as small irksome pieces of entirely his own business, precisely in the way he would set himself to mend a hole in his canvass, or cool a pan of dangerously hot varnish. Farther, he is gifted by his exquisite sensibility with continual power of pleasure in eye, ear, and fancy; and his business consists, one half of it, in the pursuit of that pleasure, and the other half in the pursuit of facts, which pursuit is another kind of pleasure, as great, and besides sharp and refreshing when the other is at all deadened by repetition.

Farther, it not only is his business to seek this pleasure, but he has no trouble in seeking it, it is everywhere ready to his hand, as ever fruit was in Paradise. Nothing exists in the world about him that is not beautiful in his eyes, in one degree or another; so far as not beautiful it is serviceable to set off beauty; nothing can possibly present itself to him that is not either lovely, or tractable, and shapeable into loveliness; there is no Evil in his eyes;—only Good, and that which displays good. Light is lovely to him; but not a whit more precious than shadow—white is pleasant to him, as it is to you and me; but he differs from you and me in having no less delight in black, when black is where

black should be. Graceful and soft forms are indeed a luxury to him; but he would not thank you for them unless you allowed him also rugged ones. Feasting is consolatory to his system, as to yours and mine, but he differs from us in feeling also an exquisite complacency in Fasting, and taking infinite satisfaction in Emptiness. You can excite his intense gratitude by the gift of Anything, and if you have Nothing to give him, you will find that Nothing is exactly the thing he most wants, and that he will immediately proceed to make half a picture out of it. How can you make such a man as this Discontented with the world? There are Three colours in it—he wants no fourth—finds three quite as much as he can manage. There's good firm ground to set easels on in it—he is not sure that they would stand so firm upon clouds, or that he could paint flying. But the world is a passing, dreamy, visionary state of things! Do you then want them to be always the same—how could one vary one's picture if that were so? But people lose their beauty and get old in the world! Then they have long beards, nothing can be more picturesque. But people die out of the world! How else would there be room for the Children in it, and how could one paint without children? But how unhappy people are in the world. It must be their own fault surely, I'm not. But how thin and ugly their grief makes them—don't you mourn for the departure of the bloom of youth? Not at all—I like painting thin people as well as fat ones—one can see their skulls better. But how wicked people are in the world! is it not dreadful to see such wickedness? Not at all—it varies the expression of their faces; there would be no pleasure in painting if they all looked alike. Besides, if there were no wicked people there would be no fighting—no heroes—no armour—no triumphs—one might as well not be a painter at all. But don't you want to mend the world then? No—I don't see that it wants mending—

unless, perhaps, it might be better with fewer fogs in it; but I don't know, and I daresay fogs are all our own fault for not draining better; at all events—the best you can do for me at present is to stand out of the light, and let me go on painting.

What can be done with such a man? How are you to make him care about future things? Even if misfortunes fall upon him, such as would make other people religious, he will not seek for consolation in Heaven. He will seek it in his painting-room. So long as he can paint, nothing will crush him. Nothing short of blindness—nothing, that is, but his ceasing to be a painter, will enable him to contemplate futurity.

Nay;—it may be replied—may he not be led, without suffering, but in his own work and his own way to that happy religion which you have admitted to be possible, in which this world may be enjoyed without forgetting the next? No; by no manner of means—at least of means hitherto brought to bear in this world's history. As far as we have seen, hitherto, all happy religious life has consisted in the fulfilment of direct social duty—in pure and calm domestic relations—in active charity, or in simply useful occupations, trades, husbandry, such as leave the mind free to dwell on matters connected with the spiritual life. You may have religious shepherds, labourers, farmers, merchants, shopmen, manufacturers—and Religious painters, so far as they make themselves manufacturers—so far as they remain painters—no.

For consider the first business of a painter; half, as I said, of his business in this world must consist in simply seeking his own pleasure, and that, in the main, a sensual pleasure. I don't mean a degrading one, but a bodily, not a spiritual pleasure. Seeing a fine red, or a beautiful line is a bodily and selfish pleasure, at least as compared with Gratitude or Love—or the other feelings called into play by social

action. And moreover, this bodily pleasure must be sought for Itself and Himself. Not for anybody else's sake. Unless a painter works wholly to please himself, he will please nobody;—he must not be thinking while he is at work of any human creature's likings, but his own. He must not benevolently desire to please any more than ambitiously —neither in kindness, nor in pride, may he defer to other people's sensations. "I alone here, on my inch of earth, paint this thing for my own sole joy, and according to my own sole mind. So I should paint it, if no other human being existed but myself. Let who will get good or ill from this—I am not concerned therewith. Thus I must do it, for thus I see it, and thus I like it, woe be to me if I paint as other people see or like." This is the first law of the painter's being; ruthless and selfish—cutting him entirely away from all love of his fellow-creatures, till the work is done. When done he may open the door to them, saying calmly "If you like this—well, I am glad. If you like it not, away with you, I've nothing for you." No great exertion of benevolence, even in this. But farther. In order to the pursuit of this beauty rightly, our great painter must not shrink in a timid way from any form of vice or ugliness. He must know them to the full, or he cannot understand the relations of beauty and virtue to them....

And this being so, as the great painter is not allowed to be indignant or exclusive, it is not possible for him to nourish his (so called) spiritual desires, as it is to an ordinarily virtuous person. Your ordinarily good man absolutely avoids, either for fear of getting harm, or because he has no pleasure in such places or people, all scenes that foster vice, and all companies that delight in it. He spends his summer evenings on his own quiet lawn, listening to the blackbirds or singing hymns with his children. But you can't learn to paint of blackbirds, nor by singing hymns.

You must be in the wildness of the midnight masque—in the misery of the dark street at dawn—in the crowd when it rages fiercest against law—in the council-chamber when it devises worst [[1]] against the people—on the moor with the wanderer, or the robber—in the boudoir with the delicate recklessness of female guilt—and all this, without being angry at any of these things—without ever losing your temper so much as to make your hand shake, or getting so much of the mist of sorrow in your eyes, as will at all interfere with your matching of colours; never even allowing yourself to disapprove of anything that anybody enjoys, so far as not to enter into their enjoyment. Does a man get drunk, you must be ready to pledge him. Is he preparing to cut purses—you must go to Gadshill with him[2]—nothing doubting—no wise thinking yourself bound to play the Justice, yet always cool yourself as you either look on, or take any necessary part in the play. Cool, and strong-willed—moveless in observant soul. Does a man die at your feet—your business is not to help him, but to note the colour of his lips; does a woman embrace her destruction before you, your business is not to save her, but to watch how she bends her arms. Not a specially religious or spiritual business this, it might appear.

And then, lastly. Not only is your painter thus concerned wholly and indiscriminately with the affairs of this world, but the mechanism of his own business is one which must occupy nearly all the thoughts of his leisure or seclusion. Whatever time others give to meditation, or other beneficial mental exercise, he must give to mere practice of touch, and study of hue. Painting cannot be learned in any other way. So many hours a day of steady practice—all your mind and nervous energy put into it—or no good painting.

[1] There is a hiatus in the MS., some such word as "tyrannies" being needed.

[2] Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Part I, i. 2.

No genius will exempt you from this law of toil; a painter's genius especially signifies the love of beauty which will never let him rest in the effort to realize it. A man of science may, if he choose, rest content at any moment with the knowledge he has attained, for however much more he learns, he will be as far from knowing All, as ever he was; but to a painter, absolute perfectness of skill is an approachable, though not an attainable goal: every hour that he gives to his work, brings him nearer a conceivable faculty of laying on the exact colour he wants in the exact shape he wants; he feels himself every day able to do more and more as he would; and though he knows he can never be absolutely perfect, any more than a continually enlarging circle can become an infinite straight line, still, the straight line is before his eyes, and forces him for ever to strive to reach it more and more nearly. This continual mechanical toil, this fixed physical aim, occupies his intellect and energy at every spare moment—blunts his sorrows, restrains his enthusiasms, limits his speculations, takes away all common chances of his being affected by the feelings or imaginations which lead other men to religion.

GREEK ART

The Queen of the Air. Vol. XIX, pp. 412–414.

I WILL not pause to fence my general principle against what you perfectly well know of the due contradiction,—that a thing may be painted very like, yet painted ill. Rest content with knowing that it *must* be like, if it is painted well; and take this further general law:—Imitation is like charity. When it is done for love, it is lovely; when it is done for show, hateful.

Well, then, this Greek coin is fine, first because the face is like a face. Perhaps you think there is something particularly handsome in the face, which you can't see in the photograph, or can't at present appreciate. But there is nothing of the kind. It is a very regular, quiet, commonplace sort of face; and any average English gentleman's, of good descent, would be far handsomer.

Fix that in your heads also, therefore, that Greek faces are not particularly beautiful. Of the much nonsense against which you are to keep your ears shut, that which is talked to you of the Greek ideal of beauty, is among the absolutest. There is not a single instance of a very beautiful head left by the highest school of Greek art. On coins, there is even no approximately beautiful one....But on the whole, the merit of Greek coins does not primarily depend on beauty of features, nor even, in the period of highest art, that of the statues. You may take the Venus of Melos[1] as a standard of beauty of the central Greek type. She has tranquil, regular, and lofty features; but could not hold her own for a moment against the beauty of a simple English girl, of pure race and kind heart.

And the reason that Greek art, on the whole, bores you, (and you know it does,) is that you are always forced to look in it for something that is not there; but which may be seen every day, in real life, all round you; and which you are naturally disposed to delight in, and ought to delight in. For the Greek race was not at all one of exalted beauty, but only of general and healthy completeness of form. They were only, and could be only, beautiful in body to the degree that they were beautiful in soul; (for you will find, when you read deeply into the matter, that the body is only the soul made visible). And the Greeks were indeed very good people, much better people than most of us think, or than many of us are; but there are

[1] The *Venus Victrix* of the Louvre.

better people alive now than the best of them, and lovelier people to be seen now, than the loveliest of them.

Then, what *are* the merits of this Greek art, which make it so exemplary for you? Well, not that it is beautiful, but that it is Right. All that it desires to do, it does, and all that it does, does well. You will find, as you advance in the knowledge of art, that its laws of self-restraint are very marvellous; that its peace of heart, and contentment in doing a simple thing, with only one or two qualities, restrictedly desired, and sufficiently attained, are a most wholesome element of education for you, as opposed to the wild writhing, and wrestling, and longing for the moon, and tilting at windmills, and agony of eyes, and torturing of fingers, and general spinning out of one's soul into fiddle-strings, which constitute the ideal life of a modern artist.

Also observe, there is entire masterhood of its business up to the required point. A Greek does not reach after other people's strength, nor out-reach his own. He never tries to paint before he can draw; he never tries to lay on flesh where there are no bones; and he never expects to find the bones of anything in his inner consciousness. Those are his first merits—sincere and innocent purpose, strong common sense and principle, and all the strength that comes of these, and all the grace that follows on that strength.

FIDELITY IN ART

PAINT WHAT WE SEE, NOT WHAT WE KNOW IS THERE

The Eagle's Nest. Vol. XXII, pp. 210–211.

Turner, in his early life, was sometimes good-natured, and would show people what he was about. He was one day making a drawing of Plymouth harbour, with some

ships at the distance of a mile or two, seen against the light. Having shown this drawing to a naval officer, the naval officer observed with surprise, and objected with very justifiable indignation, that the ships of the line had no port-holes. "No," said Turner, "certainly not. If you will walk up to Mount Edgecumbe, and look at the ships against the sunset, you will find you can't see the port-holes." "Well, but," said the naval officer, still indignant, "you know the port-holes are there." "Yes," said Turner, "I know that well enough; but my business is to draw what I see, and not what I know is there[1]."

Now, that is the law of all fine artistic work whatsoever; and, more than that, it is, on the whole, perilous to you, and undesirable, that you *should* know what is there. If, indeed, you have so perfectly disciplined your sight that it cannot be influenced by prejudice;—if you are sure that none of your knowledge of what is there will be allowed to assert itself; and that you can reflect the ship as simply as the sea beneath it does, though you may know it with the intelligence of a sailor,—then, indeed, you may allow yourself the pleasure, and what will sometimes be the safeguard from error, of learning what ships or stars, or mountains, are in reality; but the ordinary powers of human perception are almost certain to be disturbed by the knowledge of the real nature of what they draw: and, until you are quite fearless of your faithfulness to the appearances of things, the less you know of their reality the better.

And it is precisely in this passive and naïve simplicity that art becomes, not only greatest in herself, but most useful to science. If she *knew* anything of what she was representing, she would exhibit that partial knowledge with complacency; and miss the points beside it, and beyond it. Two painters draw the same mountain; the one has got

[1] Quoted from Cyrus Redding's *Fifty Years' Recollections, Literary and Personal*, 1858, vol. I, p. 205.

unluckily into his head some curiosity about glacier marking; and the other has a theory of cleavage. The one will scratch his mountain all over;—the other split it to pieces; and both drawings will be equally useless for the purposes of honest science.

Any of you who chance to know my books cannot but be surprised at my saying these things; for, of all writers on art, I suppose there is no one who appeals so often as I do to physical science. But observe, I appeal as a critic of art, never as a master of it. Turner made drawings of mountains and clouds which the public said were absurd. I said, on the contrary, they were the only true drawings of mountains and clouds ever made yet: and I proved this to be so, as only it could be proved, by steady test of physical science: but Turner had drawn his mountains rightly, long before their structure was known to any geologist in Europe; and has painted perfectly truths of anatomy in clouds which I challenge any meteorologist in Europe to explain at this day.

NATURE IN CHILDHOOD

Modern Painters (3). Vol. v, pp. 365–368.

The first thing which I remember, as an event in life, was being taken by my nurse to the brow of Friar's Crag on Derwent Water; the intense joy, mingled with awe, that I had in looking through the hollows in the mossy roots, over the crag, into the dark lake, has associated itself more or less with all twining roots of trees ever since. Two other things I remember as, in a sort, beginnings of life;—crossing Shapfells (being let out of the chaise to run up the hills), and going through Glenfarg, near Kin-

ross, in a winter's morning, when the rocks were hung with icicles; these being culminating points in an early life of more travelling than is usually indulged to a child. In such journeyings, whenever they brought me near hills, and in all mountain ground and scenery, I had a pleasure, as early as I can remember, and continuing till I was eighteen or twenty, infinitely greater than any which has been since possible to me in anything; comparable for intensity only to the joy of a lover in being near a noble and kind mistress, but no more explicable or definable than that feeling of love itself. Only thus much I can remember, respecting it, which is important to our present subject.

First: it was never independent of associated thought. Almost as soon as I could see or hear, I had got reading enough to give me associations with all kinds of scenery; and mountains, in particular, were always partly confused with those of my favourite book, Scott's *Monastery*: so that Glenfarg and all other glens were more or less enchanted to me, filled with forms of hesitating creed about Christie of the Clint Hill, and the monk Eustace; and with a general presence of White Lady everywhere. I also generally knew, or was told by my father and mother, such simple facts of history as were necessary to give more definite and justifiable association to other scenes which chiefly interested me, such as the ruins of Lochleven and Kenilworth; and thus my pleasure in mountains or ruins was never, even in earliest childhood, free from a certain awe and melancholy, and general sense of the meaning of death, though, in its principal influence, entirely exhilarating and gladdening.

Secondly: it was partly dependent on contrast with a very simple and unamused mode of general life; I was born in London, and accustomed, for two or three years, to no other prospect than that of the brick walls over the way; had no brothers nor sisters, nor companions; and though

I could always make myself happy in a quiet way, the beauty of the mountains had an additional charm of change and adventure which a country-bred child would not have felt.

Thirdly: there was no definite religious feeling mingled with it. I partly believed in ghosts and fairies; but supposed that angels belonged entirely to the Mosaic dispensation, and cannot remember any single thought or feeling connected with them. I believed that God was in heaven, and could hear me and see me; but this gave me neither pleasure nor pain, and I seldom thought of it at all. I never thought of nature as God's work, but as a separate fact or existence.

Fourthly: it was entirely unaccompanied by powers of reflection or invention. Every fancy that I had about nature was put into my head by some book; and I never reflected about anything till I grew older; and then, the more I reflected, the less nature was precious to me: I could then make myself happy, by thinking, in the dark, or in the dullest scenery; and the beautiful scenery became less essential to my pleasure.

Fifthly: it was, according to its strength, inconsistent with every evil feeling, with spite, anger, covetousness, discontent, and every other hateful passion; but would associate itself deeply with every just and noble sorrow, joy, or affection. It had not, however, always the power to repress what was inconsistent with it; and, though only after stout contention, might at last be crushed by what it had partly repressed. And as it only acted by setting one impulse against another, though it had much power in moulding the character, it had hardly any in strengthening it; it formed temperament but never instilled principle; it kept me generally good-humoured and kindly, but could not teach me perseverance or self-denial: what firmness or principle I had was quite independent of it; and it came

itself nearly as often in the form of a temptation as of a safeguard, leading me to ramble over hills when I should have been learning lessons, and lose days in reveries which I might have spent in doing kindnesses.

Lastly: although there was no definite religious sentiment mingled with it, there was a continual perception of Sanctity in the whole of nature, from the slightest thing to the vastest;—an instinctive awe, mixed with delight; an indefinable thrill, such as we sometimes imagine to indicate the presence of a disembodied spirit. I could only feel this perfectly when I was alone; and then it would often make me shiver from head to foot with the joy and fear of it, when after being some time away from hills, I first got to the shore of a mountain river, where the brown water circled among the pebbles, or when I first saw the swell of distant land against the sunset, or the first low broken wall, covered with mountain moss. I cannot in the least *describe* the feeling; but I do not think this is my fault, nor that of the English language, for I am afraid, no feeling *is* describable. If we had to explain even the sense of bodily hunger to a person who had never felt it, we should be hard put to it for words; and the joy in nature seemed to me to come of a sort of heart-hunger, satisfied with the presence of a Great and Holy Spirit. These feelings remained in their full intensity till I was eighteen or twenty, and then, as the reflective and practical power increased, and the "cares of this world[1]" gained upon me, faded gradually away, in the manner described by Wordsworth in his *Intimations of Immortality.*

[1] Mark iv. 19.

THE SEA

Turner. Vol. XIII, pp. 44–45.

THE sea up to that time had been generally regarded by painters as a liquidly composed, level-seeking consistent thing, with a smooth surface, rising to a water-mark on sides of ships; in which ships were scientifically to be embedded, and wetted, up to said water-mark, and to remain dry above the same. But Turner found during his Southern Coast tour that the sea was *not* this: that it was, on the contrary, a very incalculable and unhorizontal thing, setting its "water-mark" sometimes on the highest heavens, as well as on sides of ships;—very breakable into pieces; half of a wave separable from the other half, and on the instant carriageable miles inland;—not in any wise limiting itself to a state of apparent liquidity, but now striking like a steel gauntlet, and now becoming a cloud, and vanishing, no eye could tell whither; one moment a flint cave, the next a marble pillar, the next a mere white fleece thickening the thundery rain. He never forgot those facts; never afterwards was able to recover the idea of positive distinction between sea and sky, or sea and land. Steel gauntlet, black rock, white cloud, and men and masts, gnashed to pieces and disappearing in a few breaths and splinters among them;—a little blood on the rock angle, like red sea-weed, sponged away by the next splash of the foam, and the glistering granite and green water all pure again in vacant wrath. So stayed by him, for ever, the Image of the Sea.

One effect of this revelation of the nature of ocean to him was not a little singular. It seemed that ever afterwards his appreciation of the calmness of water was deepened by what he had witnessed of its frenzy, and a certain class of entirely tame subjects were treated by him even with

increased affection after he had seen the full manifestation of sublimity. He had always a great regard for canal boats, and instead of sacrificing these old, and one would have thought unentertaining, friends to the deities of Storm, he seems to have returned with a lulling pleasure from the foam and danger of the beach to the sedgy bank and stealthy barge of the lowland river. Thenceforward his work which introduces shipping is divided into two classes; one embodying the poetry of silence and calmness, the other of turbulence and wrath. Of intermediate conditions he gives few examples; if he lets the wind down upon the sea at all, it is nearly always violent, and though the waves may not be running high, the foam is torn off them in a way which shows they will soon run higher. On the other hand, nothing is so perfectly calm as Turner's calmness. To the canal barges of England he soon added other types of languid motion; the broad-ruddered barques of the Loire, the drooping sails of Seine, the arcaded barques of the Italian lakes slumbering on expanse of mountain-guarded wave, the dreamy prows of pausing gondolas on lagoons at moon-rise; in each and all commanding an intensity of calm, chiefly because he never admitted an instant's rigidity. The surface of quiet water with other painters becomes FIXED. With Turner it looks as if a fairy's breath would stir it, but the fairy's breath is not there.

SEA-WAVES

Turner. Vol. XIII, pp. 35–38.

THE ships of Claude[1], having hulls of a shape something between a cocoa-nut and a high-heeled shoe, balanced on their keels on the top of the water, with some scaffolding

[1] Claude Lorraine (1600–1682), landscape painter.

and cross-sticks above, and a flag at the top of every stick, form perhaps the *purest* exhibition of human inanity and fatuity which the arts have yet produced. The harbours also, in which these model navies ride, are worthy of all observation for the intensity of the false taste which, endeavouring to unite in them the characters of pleasure-ground and port, destroys the veracity of both. There are many inlets of the Italian seas where sweet gardens and regular terraces descend to the water's edge; but these are not the spots where merchant vessels anchor, or where bales are disembarked. On the other hand, there are many busy quays and noisy arsenals upon the shores of Italy; but Queens' palaces are not built upon the quays, nor are the docks in any wise adorned with conservatories or ruins. It was reserved for the genius of Claude to combine the luxurious with the lucrative, and rise to a commercial ideal, in which cables are fastened to temple pillars, and light-houses adorned with rows of beaupots. . . .

Although in artistical qualities lower than is easily by language expressible, the Italian marine painting usually conveys an idea of three facts about the sea,—that it is green, that it is deep, and that the sun shines on it. The dark plain which stands for far away Adriatic with the Venetians, and the glinting swells of tamed wave which lap about the quays of Claude, agree in giving the general impression that the ocean consists of pure water, and is open to the pure sky. But the Dutch painters, while they attain considerably greater dexterity than the Italian in mere delineation of nautical incident, were by nature precluded from ever becoming aware of these common facts; and having, in reality, never in all their lives seen the sea, but only a shallow mixture of sea-water and sand; and also never in all their lives seen the sky, but only a lower element between them and it, composed of marsh exhalation and fog-bank; they are not to be with too great

severity reproached for the dulness of their records of the nautical enterprise of Holland. We only are to be reproached, who, familiar with the Atlantic, are yet ready to accept with faith, as types of sea, the small waves *en papillote*[1], and peruke-like puffs of farinaceous foam, which were the delight of Backhuysen[2] and his compeers. If one could but arrest the connoisseurs in the fact of looking at them with belief, and, magically introducing the image of a true sea-wave, let it roll up to them through the room, —one massive fathom's height and rood's breadth of brine, passing them by but once,—dividing, Red Sea-like, on right hand and left,—but at least setting close before their eyes, for once in inevitable truth, what a sea-wave really is; its green mountainous giddiness of wrath, its overwhelming crest—heavy as iron, fitful as flame, clashing against the sky in long cloven edge,—its furrowed flanks, all ghastly clear, deep in transparent death, but all laced across with lurid nets of spume, and tearing open into meshed interstices their churned veil of silver fury, showing still the calm grey abyss below; that has no fury and no voice, but is as a grave always open, which the green sighing mounds do but hide for an instant as they pass. Would they, shuddering back from this wave of the true, implacable sea, turn forthwith to the papillotes? It might be so. It is what we are all doing, more or less, continually.

THE COLOUR OF IRON

The Two Paths. Vol. XVI, pp. 378–381.

THUS far the same interest attaches to all the earths, and all the metals of which they are made; but a deeper interest and larger beneficence belong to that ochreous earth of iron which stains the marble of your springs. It stains much

[1] In curl papers.

[2] Backhuysen (1631–1709), Dutch marine painter.

besides that marble. It stains the great earth wheresoever you can see it, far and wide—it is the colouring substance appointed to colour the globe for the sight, as well as subdue it to the service of man. You have just seen your hills covered with snow, and, perhaps, have enjoyed, at first, the contrast of their fair white with the dark blocks of pine woods; but have you ever considered how you would like them always white—not pure white, but dirty white—the white of thaw, with all the chill of snow in it, but none of its brightness? That is what the colour of the earth would be without its iron; that would be its colour, not here or there only, but in all places, and at all times. Follow out that idea till you get it in some detail. Think first of your pretty gravel walks in your gardens, and fine, like plots of sunshine between the yellow flower-beds; fancy them all suddenly turned to the colour of ashes. That is what they would be without iron ochre. Think of your winding walks over the common, as warm to the eye as they are dry to the foot, and imagine them all laid down suddenly with gray cinders. Then pass beyond the common into the country, and pause at the first ploughed field that you see sweeping up the hill sides in the sun, with its deep brown furrows, and wealth of ridges all a-glow, heaved aside by the plough-share, like deep folds of a mantle of russet velvet—fancy it all changed suddenly into grisly furrows in a field of mud. That is what it would be without iron. Pass on, in fancy, over hill and dale, till you reach the bending line of the sea shore; go down upon its breezy beach—watch the white foam flashing among the amber of it, and all the blue sea embayed in belts of gold: then fancy those circlets of far sweeping shore suddenly put into mounds of mourning—all those golden sands turned into gray slime; the fairies no more able to call to each other, "Come unto these yellow sands[1]"; but, "Come unto these drab sands." That is what they would be without iron.

[1] *Tempest*, Act i, Sc. 2, l. 376.

Iron is in some sort, therefore, the sunshine and light of landscape, so far as that light depends on the ground; but it is a source of another kind of sunshine, quite as important to us in the way we live at present—sunshine, not of landscape, but of dwelling-place.

In these days of swift locomotion I may doubtless assume that most of my audience have been somewhere out of England—have been in Scotland, or France, or Switzerland. Whatever may have been their impression, on returning to their own country, of its superiority or inferiority in other respects, they cannot but have felt one thing about it—the comfortable look of its towns and villages. Foreign towns are often very picturesque, very beautiful, but they never have quite that look of warm self-sufficiency and wholesome quiet with which our villages nestle themselves down among the green fields. If you will take the trouble to examine into the sources of this impression, you will find that by far the greater part of that warm and satisfactory appearance depends upon the rich scarlet colour of the bricks and tiles. It does not belong to the neat building—very neat building has an uncomfortable rather than a comfortable look—but it depends on the *warm* building; our villages are dressed in red tiles as our old women are in red cloaks; and it does not matter how warm the cloaks, or how bent and bowed the roof may be, so long as there are no holes in either one or the other, and the sobered but unextinguishable colour still glows in the shadow of the hood, and burns among the green mosses of the gable. And what do you suppose dyes your tiles of cottage roof? You don't paint them. It is Nature who puts all that lovely vermilion into the clay for you; and all that lovely vermilion is this oxide of iron. Think, therefore, what your streets of towns would become —ugly enough, indeed, already, some of them, but still comfortable-looking—if instead of that warm brick red, the houses became all pepper-and-salt colour. Fancy your

country villages changing from that homely scarlet of theirs which, in its sweet suggestion of laborious peace, is as honourable as the soldier's scarlet of laborious battle—suppose all those cottage roofs, I say, turned at once into the colour of unbaked clay, the colour of street gutters in rainy weather. That's what they would be without iron.

There is, however, yet another effect of colour in our English country towns which, perhaps, you may not all yourselves have noticed, but for which you must take the word of a sketcher. They are not so often merely warm scarlet as they are warm purple;—a more beautiful colour still: and they owe this colour to a mingling with the vermilion of the deep grayish or purple hue of our fine Welsh slates on the more respectable roofs, made more blue still by the colour of intervening atmosphere. If you examine one of these Welsh slates freshly broken, you will find its purple colour clear and vivid; and although never strikingly so after it has been long exposed to weather, it always retains enough of the tint to give rich harmonies of distant purple in opposition to the green of our woods and fields. Whatever brightness or power there is in the hue is entirely owing to the oxide of iron. Without it the slates would either be pale stone colour, or cold gray, or black.

PINE-TREES

Modern Painters (5). Vol. VII, pp. 104–106.

I WISH the reader to fix his attention for a moment on these two great characters of the pine, its straightness and rounded perfectness; both wonderful, and in their issue lovely, though they have hitherto prevented the tree from being drawn. I say, first, its straightness. Because we con-

stantly see it in the wildest scenery, we are apt to remember only as characteristic examples of it those which have been disturbed by violent accident or disease. Of course such instances are frequent. The soil of the pine is subject to continual change; perhaps the rock in which it is rooted splits in frost and falls forward, throwing the young stems aslope, or the whole mass of earth round it is undermined by rain, or a huge boulder falls on its stem from above, and forces it for twenty years to grow with weight of a couple of tons leaning on its side. Hence, especially at edges of loose cliffs, about waterfalls, or at glacier banks, and in other places liable to disturbance, the pine may be seen distorted and oblique; and in Turner's "Source of the Arveron[1]," he has, with his usual unerring perception of the main point in any matter, fastened on this means of relating the glacier's history. The glacier cannot explain its own motion; and ordinary observers saw in it only its rigidity; but Turner saw that the wonderful thing was its non-rigidity. Other ice is fixed, only this ice stirs. All the banks are staggering beneath its waves, crumbling and withered as by the blast of a perpetual storm. He made the rocks of his foreground loose—rolling and tottering down together; the pines smitten aside by them, their tops dead, bared by the ice wind.

Nevertheless, this is not the truest or universal expression of the pine's character. I said long ago, even of Turner: "Into the spirit of the pine he cannot enter." He understood the glacier at once; he had seen the force of sea on shore too often to miss the action of those crystal-crested waves. But the pine was strange to him, adverse to his delight in broad and flowing line; he refused its magnificent erectness. Magnificent!—nay, sometimes almost terrible. Other trees, tufting crag or hill, yield to the form and sway of the ground, clothe it with soft compliance, are partly its

[1] In the *Liber Studiorum*.

subjects, partly its flatterers, partly its comforters. But the pine rises in serene resistance, self-contained; nor can I ever without awe stay long under a great Alpine cliff, far from all house or work of men, looking up to its companies of pines, as they stand on the inaccessible juts and perilous ledges of the enormous wall, in quiet multitudes, each like the shadow of the one beside it—upright, fixed, spectral, as troops of ghosts standing on the walls of Hades, not knowing each other—dumb for ever. You cannot reach them, cannot cry to them;—those trees never heard human voice; they are far above all sound but of the winds. No foot ever stirred fallen leaf of theirs. All comfortless they stand, between the two eternities of the Vacancy and the Rock: yet with such iron will, that the rock itself looks bent and shattered beside them—fragile, weak, inconsistent, compared to their dark energy of delicate life, and monotony of enchanted pride:—unnumbered, unconquerable.

Then note, farther, their perfectness. The impression on most people's minds must have been received more from pictures than reality, so far as I can judge:—so ragged they think the pine; whereas its chief character in health is green and full *roundness*. It stands compact, like one of its own cones, slightly curved on its sides, finished and quaint as a carved tree in some Elizabethan garden; and instead of being wild in expression, forms the softest of all forest scenery; for other trees show their trunks and twisting boughs: but the pine, growing either in luxuriant mass or in happy isolation, allows no branch to be seen. Summit behind summit rise its pyramidal ranges, or down to the very grass sweep the circlets of its boughs; so that there is nothing but green cone and green carpet. Nor is it only softer, but in one sense more cheerful than other foliage; for it casts only a pyramidal shadow. Lowland forest arches overhead, and chequers the ground with darkness; but the pine, growing in scattered groups, leaves the glades between

emerald-bright. Its gloom is all its own; narrowing into the sky, it lets the sunshine strike down to the dew. And if ever a superstitious feeling comes over me among the pine-glades, it is never tainted with the old German forest fear; but is only a more solemn tone of the fairy enchantment that haunts our English meadows.

WATER

Modern Painters (4). Vol. VI, pp. 422–424.

To this supremacy in mosses and flowers we have next to add an inestimable gain in the continual presence and power of water. Neither in its clearness, its colour, its fantasy of motion, its calmness of space, depth, and reflection, or its wrath, can water be conceived by a lowlander, out of sight of sea. A sea-wave is far grander than any torrent—but of the sea and its influences we are not now speaking; and the sea itself, though it *can* be clear, is never calm, among our shores, in the sense that a mountain lake can be calm. The sea seems only to pause; the mountain lake to sleep, and to dream. Out of sight of the ocean a lowlander cannot be considered ever to have seen water at all. The mantling of the pools in the rock shadows, with the golden flakes of light sinking down through them like falling leaves, the ringing of the thin currents among the shallows, the flash and the cloud of the cascade, the earthquake and foam-fire of the cataract, the long lines of alternate mirror and mist that lull the imagery of the hills reversed in the blue of morning,—all these things belong to those hills as their undivided inheritance.

To this supremacy in wave and stream is joined a no less manifest pre-eminence in the character of trees. It is

possible among plains, in the species of trees which properly belong to them, the poplars of Amiens, for instance, to obtain a serene simplicity of grace, which, as I said, is a better help to the study of gracefulness, as such, than any of the wilder groupings of the hills; so, also, there are certain conditions of symmetrical luxuriance developed in the park and avenue, rarely rivalled in their way among mountains; and yet the mountain superiority in foliage is, on the whole, nearly as complete as it is in water: for exactly as there are some expressions in the broad reaches of a navigable lowland river, such as the Loire or Thames, not, in their way, to be matched among the rock rivers, and yet for all that a lowlander cannot be said to have truly seen the element of water at all; so even in the richest parks and avenues he cannot be said to have truly seen trees. For the resources of trees are not developed until they have difficulty to contend with; neither their tenderness of brotherly love and harmony, till they are forced to choose their ways of various life where there is contracted room for them, talking to each other with their restrained branches. The various action of trees rooting themselves in inhospitable rocks, stooping to look into ravines, hiding from the search of glacier winds, reaching forth to the rays of rare sunshine, crowding down together to drink at sweetest streams, climbing hand in hand among the difficult slopes, opening in sudden dances round the mossy knolls, gathering into companies at rest among the fragrant fields, gliding in grave procession over the heavenward ridges—nothing of this can be conceived among the unvexed and unvaried felicities of the lowland forest: while to all these direct sources of greater beauty are added, first the power of redundance,—the mere quantity of foliage visible in the folds and on the promontories of a single Alp being greater than that of an entire lowland landscape (unless a view from some cathedral tower); and to this charm of redund-

ance, that of clearer *visibility*,—tree after tree being constantly shown in successive height, one behind another, instead of the mere tops and flanks of masses, as in the plains; and the forms of multitudes of them continually defined against the clear sky, near and above, or against white clouds entangled among their branches, instead of being confused in dimness of distance.

GRASS

Modern Painters (3). Vol. v, pp. 287–289.

THERE are, it seems to me, several important deductions to be made from these facts. The Greek...delighted in the grass for its usefulness; the mediaeval, as also we moderns, for its colour and beauty. But both dwell on it as the *first* element of the lovely landscape; we saw its use in Homer[1], we see also that Dante[2] thinks the righteous spirits of the heathen enough comforted in Hades by having even the *image* of green grass put beneath their feet; the happy resting-place in Purgatory has no other delight than its grass and flowers; and, finally, in the terrestrial paradise, the feet of Matilda[3] pause where the Lethe[4] stream first bends the blades of grass. Consider a little what a depth there is in this great instinct of the human race. Gather a single blade of grass, and examine for a minute, quietly, its narrow sword-shaped strip of fluted green. Nothing, as it seems there, of notable goodness or beauty. A very little

1 Homer, *Odyssey* v, 55–74; xii, 45.

2 Dante, *Inferno* iv, 118.

3 Dante, *Purgatorio* xxviii. The Countess Matilda d. 1115. She largely endowed the Papal See. Dante represents her as walking in a meadow full of flowers.

4 The waters of Oblivion, which in the Greek mythology the souls of the dead drank, and forgot their earthly troubles.

strength, and a very little tallness, and a few delicate long lines meeting in a point,—not a perfect point neither, but blunt and unfinished, by no means a creditable or apparently much cared-for example of Nature's workmanship; made, as it seems, only to be trodden on to-day, and to-morrow to be cast into the oven[1]; and a little pale and hollow stalk, feeble and flaccid, leading down to the dull brown fibres of roots. And yet, think of it well, and judge whether of all the gorgeous flowers that beam in summer air, and of all strong and goodly trees, pleasant to the eyes or good for food,—stately palm and pine, strong ash and oak, scented citron, burdened vine,—there be any by man so deeply loved, by God so highly graced, as that narrow point of feeble green. It seems to me not to have been without a peculiar significance, that our Lord, when about to work the miracle which, of all that He showed, appears to have been felt by the multitude as the most impressive,—the miracle of the loaves,—commanded the people to sit down by companies "upon the green grass[2]." He was about to feed them with the principal produce of the earth and sea, the simplest representations of the food of mankind. He gave them the *seed* of the herb; He bade them sit down upon the herb itself, which was as great a gift, in its fitness for their joy and rest, as its perfect fruit, for their sustenance; thus, in this single order and act, when rightly understood, indicating for evermore how the Creator had entrusted the comfort, consolation, and sustenance of man, to the simplest and most despised of all the leafy families of the earth. And well does it fulfil its mission. Consider what we owe merely to the meadow grass, to the covering of the dark ground by that glorious enamel, by the companies of those soft, and countless, and peaceful spears. The fields! Follow but forth for a little time the thoughts of all that we ought to recog-

[1] Luke xii. 28.

[2] Mark vi. 39.

nize in those words. All spring and summer is in them,—the walks by silent, scented paths,—the rests in noonday heat,—the joy of herds and flocks,—the power of all shepherd life and meditation,—the life of sunlight upon the world, falling in emerald streaks, and failing in soft blue shadows, where else it would have struck upon the dark mould, or scorching dust,—pastures beside the pacing brooks,—soft banks and knolls of lowly hills,—thymy slopes of down overlooked by the blue line of lifted sea,—crisp lawns all dim with early dew, or smooth in evening warmth of barred sunshine, dinted by happy feet, and softening in their fall the sound of loving voices; all these are summed in those simple words; and these are not all. We may not measure to the full the depth of this heavenly gift in our own land; though still, as we think of it longer, the infinite of that meadow sweetness, Shakespere's peculiar joy[1], would open on us more and more, yet we have it but in part. Go out, in the spring-time, among the meadows that slope from the shores of the Swiss lakes to the roots of their lower mountains. There, mingled with the taller gentians and the white narcissus, the grass grows deep and free; and as you follow the winding mountain paths, beneath arching boughs all veiled and dim with blossom,—paths that for ever droop and rise over the green banks and mounds sweeping down in scented undulation, steep to the blue water, studded here and there with new-mown heaps, filling all the air with fainter sweetness,—look up towards the higher hills, where the waves of everlasting green roll silently into their long inlets among the shadows of the pines; and we may, perhaps, at last know the meaning of those quiet words of the 147th Psalm, "He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains."

[1] See Sonnet XXXIII, and the song at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost*.

THE FLY

The Queen of the Air. Vol. XIX, pp. 331–332.

But the most curious passage of all, and fullest of meaning, is when she[1] gives strength to Menelaus, that he may stand unwearied against Hector. He prays to her: "And blue-eyed Athena was glad that he prayed to her, first; and she gave him strength in his shoulders, and in his limbs, and she gave him the courage"—of what animal, do you suppose? Had it been Neptune or Mars, they would have given him the courage of a bull, or lion; but Athena gives him the courage of the most fearless in attack of all creatures—small or great—and very small it is, but wholly incapable of terror,—she gives him the courage of a fly[2].

Now this simile of Homer's is one of the best instances I can give you of the way in which great writers seize truths unconsciously which are for all time. It is only recent science which has completely shown the perfectness of this minute symbol of the power of Athena; proving that the insect's flight and breath are co-ordinated; that its wings are actually forcing pumps, of which the stroke compels the thoracic respiration; and that it thus breathes and flies simultaneously by the action of the same muscles, so that respiration is carried on most vigorously during flight, "while the air-vessels, supplied by many pairs of lungs instead of one, traverse the organs of flight in far greater numbers than the capillary blood-vessels of our own system, and give enormous and untiring muscular power, a rapidity of action measured by thousands of strokes in the minute, and an endurance, by miles and hours of flight[3]."

[1] Athena.

[2] *Iliad*, xvii. 566–570.

[3] From E. A. Ormerod's *British Social Wasps*: not an exact quotation.

Homer could not have known this; neither that the buzzing of the fly was produced as in a wind instrument, by a constant current of air through the trachea. But he had seen, and, doubtless, meant us to remember, the marvellous strength and swiftness of the insect's flight (the glance of the swallow itself is clumsy and slow compared to the darting of common house-flies at play); he probably attributed its murmur to the wings, but in this also there was a type of what we shall presently find recognized in the name of Pallas,—the vibratory power of the air to convey sound,—while, as a purifying creature the fly holds its place beside the old symbol of Athena in Egypt, the vulture; and as a venomous and tormenting creature, has more than the strength of the serpent in proportion to its size, being thus entirely representative of the influence of the air both in purification and pestilence; and its courage is so notable that, strangely enough, forgetting Homer's simile, I happened to take the fly for an expression of the audacity of freedom in speaking of quite another subject. Whether it should be called courage, or mere mechanical instinct, may be questioned, but assuredly no other animal, exposed to continual danger, is so absolutely without sign of fear.

THE FLY AND THE DOG

FREEDOM AND CAPTIVITY

Cestus of Aglaia. Vol. XIX, pp. 123–124.

I BELIEVE we can nowhere find a better type of a perfectly free creature than in the common house-fly. Nor free only, but brave; and irreverent to a degree which I think no human republican could by any philosophy exalt himself to.

There is no courtesy in him; he does not care whether it is king or clown whom he teases; and in every step of his swift mechanical march, and in every pause of his resolute observation, there is one and the same expression of perfect egotism, perfect independence and self-confidence, and conviction of the world's having been made for flies. Strike at him with your hand; and to him, the mechanical fact and external aspect of the matter is, what to you it would be, if an acre of red clay, ten feet thick, tore itself from the ground in one massive field, hovered over you in the air for a second, and came crashing down with an aim. That is the external aspect of it; the inner aspect, to his fly's mind, is of a quite natural and unimportant occurrence—one of the momentary conditions of his active life. He steps out of the way of your hand, and alights on the back of it. You cannot terrify him, nor govern him, nor persuade him, nor convince him. He has his own positive opinion on all matters; not an unwise one, usually, for his own ends; and will ask no advice of yours. He has no work to do—no tyrannical instinct to obey. The earthworm has his digging; the bee her gathering and building; the spider her cunning network; the ant her treasury and accounts. All these are comparatively slaves, or people of vulgar business. But your fly, free in the air, free in the chamber —a black incarnation of caprice—wandering, investigating, flitting, flirting, feasting at his will, with rich variety of choice in feast, from the heaped sweets in the grocer's window to those of the butcher's back-yard, and from the galled place on your cab-horse's back, to the brown spot in the road, from which, as the hoof disturbs him, he rises with angry republican buzz—what freedom is like his?

For captivity, again, perhaps your poor watch-dog is as sorrowful a type as you will easily find. Mine certainly is. The day is lovely, but I must write this, and cannot go out with him. He is chained in the yard, because I do not like

dogs in rooms, and the gardener does not like dogs in gardens. He has no books,—nothing but his own weary thoughts for company, and a group of those free flies whom he snaps at, with sudden ill success. Such dim hope as he may have that I may yet take him out with me, will be hour by hour, wearily disappointed; or, worse, darkened at once into a leaden despair by an authoritative "No"—too well understood. His fidelity only seals his fate; if he would not watch for me, he would be sent away, and go hunting with some happier master: but he watches, and is wise, and faithful, and miserable: and his high animal intellect only gives him the wistful powers of wonder, and sorrow, and desire, and affection, which embitter his captivity. Yet of the two, would we rather be watch-dog, or fly?

Indeed, the first point we have all to determine is not how free we are, but what kind of creatures we are. It is of small importance to any of us whether we get liberty; but of the greatest that we deserve it. Whether we can win it, fate must determine; but that we will be worthy of it, we may ourselves determine; and the sorrowfullest fate, of all that we can suffer, is to have it, *without* deserving it.

THE SNAKE

The Queen of the Air. Vol. XIX, pp. 361–363.

THE serpent crest of the king's crown, or of the god's, on the pillars of Egypt, is a mystery; but the serpent itself, gliding past the pillar's foot, is it less a mystery? Is there indeed, no tongue, except the mute forked flash from its lips, in that running brook of horror on the ground?

Why that horror? We all feel it, yet how imaginative it is, how disproportioned to the real strength of the creature!

There is more poison in an ill-kept drain,—in a pool of dish-washings at a cottage door,—than in the deadliest asp of Nile. Every back-yard which you look down into from the railway, as it carries you out by Vauxhall or Deptford, holds its coiled serpent: all the walls of those ghastly suburbs are enclosures of tank temples for serpent worship; yet you feel no horror in looking down into them, as you would if you saw the livid scales and lifted head. There is more venom, mortal, inevitable, in a single word sometimes, or in the gliding entrance of a wordless thought, than ever "vanti Libia con sua rena[1]." But that horror is of the myth, not of the creature. There are myriads lower than this, and more loathsome, in the scale of being; the links between dead matter and animation drift everywhere unseen. But it is the strength of the base element that is so dreadful in the serpent; it is the very omnipotence of the earth. That rivulet of smooth silver—how does it flow, think you? It literally rows on the earth, with every scale for an oar; it bites the dust with the ridges of its body. Watch it, when it moves slowly:—A wave, but without wind! a current, but with no fall[2]! all the body moving at the same instant, yet some of it to one side, some to another, or some forward, and the rest of the coil backwards; but all with the same calm will and equal way—no contraction, no extension; one soundless, causeless march of sequent rings, and spectral procession of spotted dust, with dissolution in its fangs, dislocation in its coils. Startle it;—the winding stream will become a twisted arrow;—the wave of poisoned life will lash through the grass like a cast lance[3].

[1] *Inferno*, XXIV, 85, where Dante describes a crowd of serpents, and adds "let Libya make no more boast of her sands."

[2] Compare the lecture on Snakes, included under the title "Living Waves," in *Deucalion*, II, ch. i, § 35, where Ruskin quotes this description.

[3] "I cannot understand this swift forward motion of serpents. The seizure of prey by the constrictor, though invisibly swift, is quite

It scarcely breathes with its one lung (the other shrivelled and abortive); it is passive to the sun and shade, and is cold or hot like a stone; yet, "it can outclimb the monkey, outswim the fish, outleap the jerboa, outwrestle the athlete, and crush the tiger[1]." It is a divine hieroglyph of the demoniac power of the earth,—of the entire earthly nature. As the bird is the clothed power of the air, so this is the clothed power of the dust; as the bird the symbol of the spirit of life, so this of the grasp and sting of death.

BIRDS

The Queen of the Air. Vol. XIX, pp. 360–361.

We will take the bird first. It is little more than a drift of the air brought into form by plumes; the air is in all its quills, it breathes through its whole frame and flesh, and glows with air in its flying, like a blown flame: it rests upon the air, subdues it, surpasses it, outraces it;—*is* the air, conscious of itself, conquering itself, ruling itself.

Also, into the throat of the bird is given the voice of the air. All that in the wind itself is weak, wild, useless in sweetness, is knit together in its song. As we may imagine

simple in mechanism; it is simply the return to its coil of an opened watchspring, and is just as instantaneous. But the steady and continuous motion, without a visible fulcrum (for the whole body moves at the same instant, and I have often seen even small snakes glide as fast as I could walk), seems to involve a vibration of the scales quite too rapid to be conceived. The motion of the crest and dorsal fin of the hippocampus" [the seahorse of Venice, so called from the shape of its head], "which is one of the intermediate types between serpent and fish, perhaps gives some resemblance of it, dimly visible, for the quivering turns the fin into a mere mist. The entrance of the two barbs of a bee's sting by alternate motion, 'the teeth of one barb acting as a fulcrum for the other,' must be something like the serpent motion on a small scale." Note by Ruskin.

[1] Richard Owen, *On the Anatomy of Vertebrates.*

the wild form of the cloud closed into the perfect form of the bird's wings, so the wild voice of the cloud into its ordered and commanded voice; unwearied, rippling through the clear heaven in its gladness, interpreting all intense passion through the soft spring nights, bursting into acclaim and rapture of choir at daybreak, or lisping and twittering among the boughs and hedges through heat of day, like little winds that only make the cowslip bells shake, and ruffle the petals of the wild rose.

Also, upon the plumes of the bird are put the colours of the air: on these the gold of the cloud, that cannot be gathered by any covetousness; the rubies of the clouds, that are not the price of Athena, but *are* Athena; the vermilion of the cloud-bar, and the flame of the cloud-crest, and the snow of the cloud, and its shadow, and the melted blue of the deep wells of the sky—all these, seized by the creating spirit, and woven by Athena herself into films and threads of plume; with wave on wave following and fading along breast, and throat, and opened wings, infinite as the dividing of the foam and the sifting of the sea-sand;—even the white down of the cloud seeming to flutter up between the stronger plumes, seen, but too soft for touch.

And so the Spirit of the Air is put into, and upon, this created form; and it becomes, through twenty centuries, the symbol of Divine help, descending, as the Fire, to speak, but as the Dove, to bless.

THE DOVE

The Eagle's Nest. Vol. XXII, p. 530.

OF the splendour of your own true life, you are told, in the words which, to-day, let me call, as your Fathers did, words of inspiration—"Yet shall ye be as the wings of a

dove, that is covered with silver wings and her feathers with gold[1]." Of the manifold iris of colour in the dove's plumage, watched carefully in sunshine as the bird moves, I cannot hope to give you any conception by words; but that it is the most exquisite, in the modesty of its light, and in the myriad mingling of its hue, of all plumage, I may partly prove to you in this one fact, that out of all studies of colour, the one which I would desire most to place within your reach in these schools, is Turner's drawing of a dove, done when he was in happy youth at Farnley[2]. But of the causes of this colour, and of the peculiar subtlety in its iridescence, nothing is told you in any scientific book I have ever seen on ornithology.

Of the power of flight in these wings, and the tender purpose of their flight, you hear also in your Fathers' book. To the Church, flying from her enemies into desolate wilderness, there were indeed given two wings as of a great eagle[3]. But the weary saint of God, looking forward to his home in calm of eternal peace, prays rather—"Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then should I flee away, and be at rest[4]." And of these wings, and this mind of hers, this is what reverent science should teach you: first, with what parting of plume, and what soft pressure and rhythmic beating of divided air, she reaches that miraculous swiftness of undubious motion, compared with which the tempest is slow, and the arrow uncertain; and secondly, what clue there is, visible, or conceivable to thought of man, by which, to her living conscience and errorless pointing of magnetic soul, her distant home is felt afar beyond the horizon, and the straight path, through concealing clouds, and over trackless lands, made plain to her desire, and her duty, by the finger of God.

1 Psalm lxviii. 13.
2 Near Ilkley, where Turner often stayed with Mr Fawkes.
3 Revelation xii. 14. 4 Psalm lv. 6.

ST GEORGE

St Mark's Rest. Vol. XXIV, pp. 383–387.

THE first picture on the left hand as we enter the chapel shows St George[1] on horseback, in battle with the Dragon. Other artists, even Tintoret, are of opinion that the Saint rode a white horse. The champion of Purity must, they hold, have been carried to victory by a charger ethereal and splendid as a summer cloud. Carpaccio[2] believed that his horse was a dark brown. He knew that this colour is generally the mark of greatest strength and endurance; he had no wish to paint here an ascetic's victory over the flesh. St George's warring is in the world, and for it; he is the enemy of its desolation, the guardian of its peace; and all vital force of the lower Nature he shall have to bear him into battle; submissive indeed to the spur, bitted and bridled for obedience, yet honourably decked with trappings whose studs and bosses are fair carven faces. But though of colour prosaically useful, this horse has a deeper kinship with the air. Many of the ancient histories and vase-paintings tell us that Perseus, when he saved Andromeda, was mounted on Pegasus[3]. Look now here at the mane and tail, swept still back upon the wind, though already the passionate onset has been brought to sudden pause in that crash of encounter. Though the flash of an earthly fire be in his eye, its force in his limbs—though the clothing of his neck be Chthonian thunder—this steed is brother, too, to that one,

[1] St George of Cappadocia, a distinguished soldier, martyred by Diocletian in 303 A.D. Tutelary Saint of England. Edward III founded the Order of the Garter in his honour, 1344.

[2] See page 95, note.

[3] In the Greek legend Perseus, mounted on Pegasus, the flying horse, saved Andromeda, who had been bound to a rock, from being devoured by a sea-monster.

born by furthest ocean wells, whose wild mane and sweeping wings stretch through the firmament as light is breaking over earth. More: these masses of billowy hair tossed upon the breeze of heaven are set here for a sign that this, though but one of the beasts that perish, has the roots of his strong nature in the power of heavenly life, and is now about His business who is Lord of heaven and Father of men. The horse is thus, as we shall see, opposed to certain other signs, meant for our learning, in the dreams of horror round this monster's den.

St George, armed to his throat, sits firmly in the saddle. All the skill gained in a chivalric youth, all the might of a soldier's manhood, he summons for this strange tourney, stooping slightly and gathering his strength as he drives the spear-point straight between his enemy's jaws. His face is very fair, at once delicate and powerful, well-bred in the fullest bearing of the words; a Plantagenet face in general type, but much refined. The lower lip is pressed upwards, the brow knit, in anger and disgust partly, but more in care —and care not so much concerning the fight's ending, as that this thrust in it shall now be rightly dealt. His hair flows in bright golden ripples, strong as those of a great spring whose upwelling waters circle through some clear pool, but it breaks at last to float over brow and shoulders in tendrils of living light. Had Carpaccio been aware that St George and Perseus are, in this deed, one; had he even held, as surely as Professor Müller finds reason to do, that at first Perseus was but the sun in his strength—for very name, being called "the Brightly-Burning"—this glorious head could not have been, more completely than it is, made the centre of light in the picture. In Greek works of art, as a rule, Perseus, when he rescues Andromeda, continues to wear the peaked Phrygian cap, dark helmet of Hades[1], by whose virtue he moved, invisible, upon Medusa through

[1] The helmet of darkness was given by Hermes to Perseus.

coiling mists of dawn. Only after victory might he unveil his brightness. But about George from the first is no shadow. Creeping thing of keenest eye shall not see that splendour which is so manifest, nor with guile spring upon it unaware, to its darkening. Such knowledge alone for the dragon—dim sense as of a horse with its rider, moving to the fatal lair, hope, pulseless,—not of heart, but of talon and maw—that here is yet another victim, then only between his teeth that keen lance-point, thrust far before the Holy Apparition at whose rising the Power of the Vision of Death waxes faint and drops those terrible wings that bore under their shadow, not healing, but wounds for men.

The spear pierces the base of the dragon's brain, its point penetrating right through and standing out at the back of the head just above its junction with the spine. The shaft breaks in the shock between the dragon's jaws. This shivering of St George's spear is almost always emphasised in pictures of him—sometimes, as here, in act, oftener by position of the splintered fragments prominent in the foreground. This is no tradition of ancient art, but a purely mediaeval incident, yet not, I believe, merely the vacant reproduction of a sight become familiar to the spectator of tournaments. The spear was type of the strength of human wisdom. This checks the enemy in his attack, subdues him partly, yet is shattered, having done so much, and of no help in perfecting the victory or in reaping its reward of joy. But at the Saint's "loins, girt about with truth," there hangs his holier weapon—the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

The Dragon is bearded like a goat, and essentially a thorny creature. Every ridge of his body, wings, and head, bristles with long spines, keen, sword-like, of an earthy brown colour or poisonous green. But the most truculent-looking of all is a short, strong, hooked one at the back of his head, close to where the spear-point protrudes. These

thorns are partly the same vision—though seen with even clearer eyes, dreamed by a heart yet more tender—as Spenser saw in the troop of urchins coming up with the host of other lusts against the Castle of Temperance[1]. They are also symbolic as weeds whose deadly growth brings the power of earth to waste and chokes its good. These our Lord of spiritual husbandmen must for preliminary task destroy. The agricultural process consequent on this first step in tillage we shall see in the next picture, whose subject is the triumph of the ploughshare sword, as the subject of this one is the triumph of the pruning-hook spear. To an Italian of Carpaccio's time, further, spines—etymologically connected in Greek and Latin, as in English, with the backbone—were an acknowledged symbol of the lust of the flesh, whose defeat the artist has here set himself to paint. The mighty coiling tail, as of a giant eel, carries out the portraiture. For this, loathsome as the body is full of horror, takes the place of the snails ranked by Spenser in line beside his urchins. Though the monster, half rampant, rises into air, turning claw and spike and tooth towards St George, we are taught by this grey abomination twisting in the slime of death that the threatened destruction is to be dreaded not more for its horror than for its shame.

A SLEEPING BEAUTY

Fors Clavigera. Vol. XXVII, pp. 342–347.

In the year 1869, just before leaving Venice, I had been carefully looking at a picture by Victor Carpaccio[2], representing the dream of a young princess. Carpaccio has taken

[1] *Faerie Queene*, II. xi. 13.

[2] Carpaccio, Vittore (1455–1522), Venetian painter. One of his best-known works is a set of frescoes illustrating the life of St Ursula, who, according to the legend, was martyred at Cologne with eleven thousand Christian maidens, her companions.

much pains to explain to us, as far as he can, the kind of life she leads, by completely painting her little bedroom in the light of dawn, so that you can see everything in it. It is lighted by two doubly-arched windows, the arches being painted crimson round their edges, and the capitals of the shafts that bear them, gilded. They are filled at the top with small round panes of glass; but beneath, are open to the blue morning sky, with a low lattice across them: and in the one at the back of the room are set two beautiful white Greek vases with a plant in each; one having rich dark and pointed green leaves, the other crimson flowers, but not of any species known to me, each at the end of a branch like a spray of heath.

These flower-pots stand on a shelf which runs all round the room, and beneath the window, at about the height of the elbow, and serves to put things on anywhere: beneath it, down to the floor, the walls are covered with green cloth; but above, are bare and white. The second window is nearly opposite the bed, and in front of it is the princess's reading-table, some two feet and a half square, covered by a red cloth with a white border and dainty fringe; and beside it her seat, not at all like a reading-chair in Oxford, but a very small three-legged stool like a music-stool, covered with crimson cloth. On the table are a book set up at a slope fittest for reading, and an hour-glass. Under the shelf, near the table, so as to be easily reached by the outstretched arm, is a press full of books. The door of this has been left open, and the books, I am grieved to say, are rather in disorder, having been pulled about before the princess went to bed, and one left standing on its side.

Opposite this window, on the white wall, is a small shrine or picture (I can't see which, for it is in sharp retiring perspective) with a lamp before it, and a silver vessel hung from the lamp, looking like one for holding incense.

The bed is a broad four-poster, the posts being beautifully

wrought golden or gilded rods, variously wreathed and branched, carrying a canopy of warm red. The princess's shield is at the head of it, and the feet are raised entirely above the floor of the room, on a dais which projects at the lower end so as to form a seat, on which the child has laid her crown. Her little blue slippers lie at the side of the bed,—her white dog beside them. The coverlid is scarlet, the white sheet folded half-way back over it; the young girl lies straight, bending neither at the waist nor knee, the sheet rising and falling over her in a narrow unbroken wave, like the shape of the coverlid of the last sleep, when the turf scarcely rises. She is some seventeen or eighteen years old, her head is turned towards us on the pillow, the cheek resting on her hand, as if she were thinking, yet utterly calm in sleep, and almost colourless. Her hair is tied with a narrow riband, and divided into two wreaths, which encircle her head like a double crown. The white night-gown hides the arm raised on the pillow, down to the wrist.

At the door of the room an angel enters (the little dog, though lying awake, vigilant, takes no notice). He is a very small angel, his head just rises a little above the shelf round the room, and would only reach as high as the princess's chin, if she were standing up. He has soft grey wings, lustreless; and his dress, of subdued blue, has violet sleeves, open above the elbow, and showing white sleeves below. He comes in without haste, his body, like a mortal one, casting shadow from the light through the door behind, his face perfectly quiet; a palm-branch in his right hand—a scroll in his left.

So dreams the princess, with blessed eyes, that need no earthly dawn. It is very pretty of Carpaccio to make her dream out the angel's dress so particularly, and notice the slashed sleeves; and to dream so little an angel—very nearly a doll angel,—bringing her the branch of palm, and message. But the lovely characteristic of all is the evident

delight of her continual life. Royal power over herself, and happiness in her flowers, her books, her sleeping, and waking, her prayers, her dreams, her earth, her heaven. . . .

"How do I know the princess is industrious?"

Partly, by the trim state of her room,—by the hour-glass on the table,—by the evident use of all the books she has (well bound, every one of them, in stoutest leather or velvet, and with no dog's-ears), but more distinctly from another picture of her, not asleep. In that one[1], a prince of England has sent to ask her in marriage: and her father, little liking to part with her, sends for her to his room to ask her what she would do. He sits, moody and sorrowful; she, standing before him in a plain housewifely dress, talks quietly, going on with her needlework all the time.

THE BOW OF A BOAT

Turner. Vol. XIII, pp. 13–15.

Of all things, living or lifeless, upon this strange earth, there is but one which, having reached the mid-term of appointed human endurance on it, I still regard with unmitigated amazement. I know, indeed, that all around me is wonderful—but I cannot answer it with wonder:—a dark veil, with the foolish words, Nature of Things, upon it, casts its deadening folds between me and their dazzling strangeness. Flowers open, and stars rise, and it seems to me they could have done no less. The mystery of distant mountain-blue only makes me reflect that the earth is of necessity mountainous;—the sea-wave breaks at my feet, and I do not see how it should have remained unbroken. But one object there is still, which I never pass without the renewed wonder of childhood, and that

[1] In the Venetian Academy.

is the bow of a Boat. Not of a racing-wherry, or revenue cutter, or clipper yacht; but the blunt head of a common, bluff, undecked sea-boat, lying aside in its furrow of beach sand. The sum of Navigation is in that. You may magnify it or decorate as you will: you do not add to the wonder of it. Lengthen it into hatchet-like edge of iron,—strengthen it with complex tracery of ribs of oak,—carve it and gild it till a column of light moves beneath it on the sea,—you have made no more of it than it was at first. That rude simplicity of bent plank, that can breast its way through the death that is in the deep sea, has in it the soul of shipping. Beyond this, we may have more work, more men, more money; we cannot have more miracle.

For there is, first, an infinite strangeness in the perfection of the thing, as work of human hands. I know nothing else that man does, which is perfect, but that. All his other doings have some sign of weakness, affectation, or ignorance in them. They are overfinished or underfinished; they do not quite answer their end, or they show a mean vanity in answering it too well.

But the boat's bow is naïvely perfect: complete without an effort. The man who made it knew not he was making anything beautiful, as he bent its planks into those mysterious, ever-changing curves. It grows under his hand into the image of a sea-shell; the seal, as it were, of the flowing of the great tides and streams of ocean stamped on its delicate rounding. He leaves it when all is done, without a boast. It is simple work but it will keep out water. And every plank thenceforward is a Fate, and has men's lives wreathed in the knots of it, as the cloth-yard shaft had their deaths in its plumes.

Then, also, it is wonderful on account of the greatness of the thing accomplished. No other work of human hands ever gained so much. Steam-engines and telegraphs indeed help us to fetch, and carry, and talk; they lift weights for

us, and bring messages, with less trouble than would have been needed otherwise; this saving of trouble, however, does not constitute a new faculty, it only enhances the powers we already possess. But in that bow of the boat is the gift of another world. Without it, what prison wall would be so strong as that "white and wailing fringe" of sea? What maimed creatures were we all, chained to our rocks, Andromeda-like, or wandering by the endless shores, wasting our incommunicable strength, and pining in hopeless watch of unconquerable waves! The nails that fasten together the planks of the boat's bow are the rivets of the fellowship of the world. Their iron does more than draw lightning out of heaven, it leads love round the earth.

Then also, it is wonderful on account of the greatness of the enemy that it does battle with. To lift dead weight; to overcome length of languid space; to multiply or systematise a given force; this we may see done by the bar, or beam, or wheel, without wonder. But to war with that living fury of waters, to bare its breast, moment after moment, against the unwearied enmity of ocean,—the subtle, fitful, implacable smiting of the black waves, provoking each other on, endlessly, all the infinite march of the Atlantic rolling on behind them to their help,—and still to strike them back into a wreath of smoke and futile foam, and win its way against them, and keep its charge of life from them;—does any other soulless thing do as much as this?

SHIPS

Turner. Vol. XIII, pp. 24–27.

But, meanwhile, the marine deities were incorruptible. It was not possible to starch the sea; and precisely as the stiffness fastened upon men, it vanished from ships. What

had once been a mere raft, with rows of formal benches, pushed along by laborious flap of oars, and with infinite fluttering of flags and swelling of poops above, gradually began to lean more heavily into the deep water, to sustain a gloomy weight of guns, to draw back its spider-like feebleness of limb, and open its bosom to the wind, and finally darkened down from all its painted vanities into the long, low hull, familiar with the overflying foam; that has no other pride but in its daily duty and victory; while, through all these changes, it gained continually in grace, strength, audacity, and beauty, until at last it has reached such a pitch of all these, that there is not, except the very loveliest creatures of the living world, anything in nature so absolutely notable, bewitching, and, according to its means and measure, heart-occupying, as a well-handled ship under sail in a stormy day. Any ship, from lowest to proudest, has due place in that architecture of the sea; beautiful, not so much in this or that piece of it, as in the unity of all, from cottage to cathedral, into their great buoyant dynasty. Yet, among them, the fisher boat, corresponding to the cottage on the land (only far more sublime than a cottage ever can be), is on the whole the thing most venerable. I doubt if ever academic grove were half so fit for profitable meditation as the little strip of shingle between two black, steep, overhanging sides of stranded fishing-boats. The clear heavy water-edge of ocean rising and falling close to their bows, in that unaccountable way which the sea has always in calm weather, turning the pebbles over and over as if with a rake, to look for something, and then stopping a moment down at the bottom of the bank, and coming up again with a little run and clash, throwing a foot's depth of salt crystal in an instant between you and the round stone you were going to take in your hand; sighing, all the while, as if it would infinitely rather be doing something else. And the dark flanks of the fishing-

boats all aslope above, in their shining quietness, hot in the morning sun, rusty and seamed with square patches of plank nailed over their rents; just rough enough to let the little flat-footed fisher-children haul or twist themselves up to the gunwales, and drop back again along some stray rope; just round enough to remind us, in their broad and gradual curves, of the sweep of the green surges they know so well, and of the hours when those old sides of seared timber, all ashine with the sea, plunge and dip into the deep green purity of the mounded waves more joyfully than a deer lies down among the grass of spring, the soft white cloud of foam opening momentarily at the bows, and fading or flying high into the breeze where the sea-gulls toss and shriek,—the joy and beauty of it, all the while, so mingled with the sense of unfathomable danger, and the human effort and sorrow going on perpetually from age to age, waves rolling for ever, and winds moaning for ever, and faithful hearts trusting and sickening for ever, and brave lives dashed away about the rattling beach like weeds for ever; and still at the helm of every lonely boat, through starless night and hopeless dawn[1], His hand, who spread the fisher's net over the dust of the Sidonian palaces, and gave into the fisher's hand the keys of the kingdom of heaven[2].

Next after the fishing-boat—which, as I said, in the architecture of the sea represents the cottage, more especially the pastoral or agricultural cottage, watchful over some pathless domain of moorland or arable, as the fishing-boat swims humbly in the midst of the broad green fields and hills of ocean, out of which it has to win such fruit as they can give, and to compass with net or drag such flocks as it may find,—next to this ocean-cottage ranks in interest, it seems to me, the small, over-wrought, under-crewed, ill-

[1] These words gave its title to the picture by Mr Frank Bramley, A.R.A. "A Hopeless Dawn," now in the Tate Gallery.

[2] Matthew xvi. 19.

caulked merchant brig or schooner; the kind of ship which first shows its couple of thin masts over the low fields or marshes as we near any third-rate seaport; and which is sure somewhere to stud the great space of glittering water, seen from any sea-cliff, with its four or five square-set sails. Of the larger and more polite tribes of merchant vessels, three-masted, and passenger-carrying, I have nothing to say, feeling in general little sympathy with people who want to *go* anywhere; nor caring much about anything, which in the essence of it expresses a desire to get to other sides of the world; but only for homely and stay-at-home ships, that live their life and die their death about English rocks. Neither have I any interest in the higher branches of commerce, such as traffic with spice islands, and porterage of painted tea-chests or carved ivory; for all this seems to me to fall under the head of commerce of the drawing-room; costly, but not venerable. I respect in the merchant service only those ships that carry coals, herrings, salt, timber, iron, and such other commodities, and that have disagreeable odour, and unwashed decks. But there are few things more impressive to me than one of these ships lying up against some lonely quay in a black sea-fog, with the furrow traced under its tawny keel far in the harbour slime. The noble misery that there is in it, the might of its rent and strained unseemliness, its wave-worn melancholy, resting there for a little while in the comfortless ebb, unpitied, and claiming no pity; still less honoured, least of all conscious of any claim to honour; casting and craning by due balance whatever is in its hold up to the pier, in quiet truth of time; spinning of wheel, and slackening of rope, and swinging of spade, in as accurate cadence as a waltz music; one or two of its crew, perhaps away forward, and a hungry boy and yelping dog eagerly interested in something from which a blue dull smoke rises out of pot or pan; but dark-browed and silent, their limbs slack, like the ropes above them, entangled

as they are in those inextricable meshes about the patched knots and heaps of ill-reefed sable sail. What a majestic sense of service in all that languor! the rest of human limbs and hearts, at utter need, not in sweet meadows or soft air, but in harbour slime and biting fog; so drawing their breath once more, to go out again, without lament, from between the two skeletons of pier-heads, vocal with wash of under wave, into the grey troughs of tumbling brine; there, as they can, with slacked rope, and patched sail, and leaky hull, again to roll and stagger far away amidst the wind and salt sleet, from dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn, winning day by day their daily bread; and for last reward, when their old hands, on some winter night, lose feeling along the frozen ropes, and their old eyes miss mark of the lighthouse quenched in foam, the so-long impossible Rest, that shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more[1],—their eyes and mouths filled with the brown sea-sand.

THE FIGHTING TÉMÉRAIRE

Turner. Vol. XIII, pp. 170–172.

THE painting of the *Téméraire*[2] was received with a general feeling of sympathy. No abusive voice, as far as I remember, was ever raised against it. And the feeling was just: for of all pictures of subjects not visibly involving human pain, this is, I believe, the most pathetic that was ever painted. The utmost pensiveness which can ordinarily be given to a landscape depends on adjuncts of ruin: but no ruin was ever so affecting as this gliding of the vessel to her grave.

[1] Revelation vii. 16.

[2] The picture of the old battle-ship, the *Téméraire*, which fought at Trafalgar, being towed to her last moorings.

A ruin cannot be, for whatever memories may be connected with it, and whatever witness it may have borne to the courage or the glory of men, it never seems to have offered itself to their danger, and associated itself with their acts, as a ship of battle can. The mere facts of motion, and obedience to human guidance, double the interest of the vessel: nor less her organised perfectness, giving her the look, and partly the character of a living creature, that may indeed be maimed in limb, or decrepit in frame, but must either live or die, and cannot be added to nor diminished from—heaped up and dragged down—as a building can. And this particular ship, crowned in the Trafalgar hour of trial with chief victory—prevailing over the fatal vessel that had given Nelson death—surely, if ever anything without a soul deserved honour or affection, we owed them here. Those sails that strained so full bent into the battle—that broad bow that struck the surf aside, enlarging silently in steadfast haste, full front to the shot—resistless and without reply—those triple ports whose choirs of flame rang forth in their courses, into the fierce revenging monotone, which, when it died away, left no answering voice to rise any more upon the sea against the strength of England—those sides that were wet with the long runlets of English life-blood, like press-planks at vintage, gleaming goodly crimson down to the cast and clash of the washing foam—those pale masts that stayed themselves up against the war-ruin, shaking out their ensigns through the thunder, till sail and ensign drooped—steep in the death-stilled pause of Andalusian air, burning with its witness-cloud of human souls at rest,—surely, for these some sacred care might have been left in our thoughts—some quiet space amidst the lapse of English waters?

Nay, not so. We have stern keepers to trust her glory to—the fire and the worm. Never more shall sunset lay golden robe on her, nor starlight tremble on the waves that part

at her gliding. Perhaps, where the low gate opens to some cottage-garden, the tired traveller may ask, idly, why the moss grows so green on its rugged wood; and even the sailor's child may not answer, nor know, that the night-dew lies deep in the war-rents of the wood of the old *Téméraire*.

THE SCAPEGOAT[1]

Academy Notes. Vol. XIV, pp. 61–66.

The Scapegoat (Lev. xvi.). (W. Holman Hunt[2].)

This singular picture, though in many respects faultful, and in some wholly a failure, is yet the one of all in the gallery which should furnish us with most food for thought. First, consider it simply as an indication of the temper and aim of the rising artists of England. Until of late years, young painters have been mostly divided into two groups: one poor, hard-working, and suffering, compelled more or less, for immediate bread, to obey whatever call might be made upon them by patron or publisher; the other, of perhaps more manifest cleverness or power, able in some degree to command the market, and apt to make the pursuit of art somewhat complementary to that of pleasure, so that a successful artist's studio has not been in general a place where idle and gay people would have found them-

[1] See Leviticus xvi.

[2] W. Holman Hunt (1827–1910) the painter of the "Light of the World" and other famous pictures. Of "The Scapegoat" F. Madox Brown, who like Holman Hunt belonged to the pre-Raphaelite band of painters, wrote, "Hunt's 'Scapegoat' requires to be seen to be believed in. Only then can it be understood how, by the might of genius, out of an old goat and some saline incrustations, can be made one of the most tragic and impressive works in the History of art."

selves ill at ease, or at a loss for amusement. But here is a young painter, the slave neither of poverty nor pleasure, —emancipated from the garret, despising the green room, and selecting for his studio a place where he is liable certainly to no agreeable forms of interruption. He travels, not merely to fill his portfolio with pretty sketches, but in as determined a temper as ever mediaeval pilgrim, to do a certain work in the Holy Land. Arrived there, with the cloud of Eastern War gathered to the north of him, and involving, for most men, according to their adventurous or timid temper, either an interest which would at once have attracted them to its immediate field, or a terror which would have driven them from work in its threatening neighbourhood, he pursues calmly his original purpose; and while the hills of the Crimea were white with tents of war, and the fiercest passions of the nations of Europe burned in high funeral flames over their innumerable dead, one peaceful English tent was pitched beside a shipless sea, and the whole strength of an English heart spent in painting a weary goat, dying upon its salt sand.

And utmost strength of heart it needed. Though the tradition that a bird cannot fly over this sea is an exaggeration, the air in its neighbourhood is stagnant and pestiferous, polluted by the decaying vegetation brought down by the Jordan in its floods; the bones of the beasts of burden that have died by the "way of the sea[1]," lie like wrecks upon its edge, bared by the vultures and bleached by the salt ooze, which, though tideless, rises and falls irregularly, swollen or wasted. Swarms of flies fed on the carcases, darken an atmosphere heavy at once with the poison of the marsh and the fever of the desert; and the Arabs themselves will not encamp for a night amidst the exhalations of the volcanic chasm.

This place of study the young English painter chooses.

[1] Isaiah ix. 1; Matthew iv. 15.

He encamps a little way above it; sets his easel upon its actual shore; pursues his work with patience through months of solitude; and paints, crag by crag, the purple mountains of Moab, and, grain by grain, the pale ashes of Gomorrah.

And I think his object was one worthy of such an effort. Of all the scenes in the Holy Land, there are none whose present aspect tends so distinctly to confirm the statements of Scripture as this condemned shore. It is therefore exactly the scene of which it might seem most desirable to give a perfect idea to those who cannot see it for themselves; it is that also which fewest travellers are able to see; and which, I suppose, no one but Mr Hunt himself would ever have dreamed of making the subject of a close pictorial study. The work was therefore worth his effort; and he has connected it in a simple, but most touching way, with other subjects of reflection, by the figure of the animal upon its shore. This is, indeed, one of the instances in which the subject of a picture is wholly incapable of explaining itself; but, as we are too apt—somewhat too hastily—to accept at once a subject as intelligible and rightly painted, if we happen to know enough of the story to interest us in it, so we are apt, somewhat unkindly, to refuse a painter the little patience of inquiry or remembrance, which, once granted, would enable him to interest us all the more deeply, because the thoughts suggested were not entirely familiar. It is necessary, in this present instance, only to remember that the view taken by the Jews of the appointed sending forth of the scapegoat into the Wilderness was that it represented the carrying away of their sin into a place uninhabited and forgotten; and that the animal on whose head the sin was laid became accursed, so that, "though not commanded by the law, they used to maltreat the goat Azazel;—to spit upon him, and to pluck off his hair[1]." The goat, thus tormented, and with a scarlet fillet bound

[1] From a sermon by the Rev. H. Melvill, preached in 1856.

about its brow was driven by the multitude wildly out of the camp, and pursued into the Wilderness. The painter supposes it to have fled towards the Dead Sea, and to be just about to fall exhausted at sunset—its hoofs entangled in the crust of salt upon the shore. The opposite mountains, seen in the fading light, are that chain of Abarim on which Moses died[1].

Now, we cannot, I think, esteem too highly, or receive too gratefully, the temper and the toil which have produced this picture for us. Consider for a little while the feelings involved in its conception, and the self-denial and resolve needed for its execution; and compare them with the modes of thought in which our former painters used to furnish us annually with their "Cattle pieces" or "Lake scenes," and I think we shall see cause to hold this picture as one more truly honourable to us, and more deep and sure in its promise of future greatness in our schools of painting, than all the works of "high art" that since the foundation of the Academy have ever taxed the wonder, or weariness, of the English public. But, at the same time, this picture indicates a danger to our students of a kind hitherto unknown in any school—the danger of a too great intensity of feeling, making them forget the requirements of painting as an *art*. This picture regarded merely as a landscape, or as a composition, is a total failure. The mind of the painter has been so excited by the circumstances of the scene, that, like a youth expressing his earnest feeling by feeble verse (which seems to him good, because he *means* so much by it), Mr Hunt has been blinded by his intense sentiment to the real weakness of the pictorial expression; and in his earnest desire to paint the Scapegoat, has forgotten to ask himself first, whether he could paint a goat at all.

I am not surprised that he should fail in painting the distant mountains; for the forms of large distant landscape

[1] Deuteronomy xxxii. 49, 50.

are a quite new study to the Pre-Raphaelites, and they cannot be expected to conquer them at first: but it is a great disappointment to me to observe, even in the painting of the goat itself, and of the fillet on its brow, a nearly total want of all that effective manipulation which Mr Hunt displayed in his earlier pictures. I do not say that there is absolute want of skill—there may be difficulties encountered which I do not perceive—but the difficulties, whatever they may have been, are not conquered: this may be very faithful and very wonderful painting—but it is not *good* painting; and much as I esteem feeling and thought in all works of art, still I repeat, again and again, a painter's business is first to *paint*. No one could sympathize more than I with the general feeling displayed in the "Light of the World"; but unless it had been accompanied with perfectly good nettle painting, and ivy painting, and jewel painting, I should never have praised it; and though I acknowledge the good purpose of this picture, yet, inasmuch as there is no good hair painting, nor hoof painting in it, I hold it to be good only as an omen, not as an achievement; and I have hardly ever seen a composition, left apparently almost to chance, come so unluckily: the insertion of the animal in the exact centre of the canvas making it look as if it were painted for a sign. I can only, therefore, in thanking Mr Hunt heartily for his work, pray him, for practice' sake, now to paint a few pictures with less feeling in them, and more handling.

TWO WINDMILLS

Modern Painters (4). Vol. VI, pp. 16–19.

On the whole, the first master of the lower picturesque, among our living artists, is Clarkson Stanfield; his range of art being, indeed, limited by his pursuit of this character.

I take, therefore, a windmill, forming the principal subject in his drawing of Brittany near Dol, and beside it I place a windmill, which forms also the principal subject in Turner's study of the Lock, in the Liber Studiorum[1]. At first sight I daresay the reader may like Stanfield's best; and there is, indeed, a great deal more in it to attract liking. Its roof is nearly as interesting in its ruggedness as a piece of the stony peak of a mountain, with a chalet built on its side; and it is exquisitely varied in swell and curve. Turner's roof, on the contrary, is a plain, ugly gable,—a windmill roof, and nothing more. Stanfield's sails are twisted into most effective wrecks, as beautiful as pine bridges over Alpine streams; only they do not look as if they had ever been serviceable windmill sails; they are bent about in cross and awkward ways, as if they were warped or cramped; and their timbers look heavier than necessary. Turner's sails have no beauty about them like that of Alpine bridges; but they have the exact switchy sway of the sail that is always straining against the wind; and the timbers form clearly the lightest possible framework for the canvas,—thus showing the essence of windmill sail. Then the clay wall of Stanfield's mill is as beautiful as a piece of chalk cliff, all worn into furrows by the rain, coated with mosses, and rooted to the ground by a heap of crumbled stone, embroidered with grass and creeping plants. But this is not a serviceable state for a windmill to be in. The essence of a windmill, as distinguished from all other mills, is, that it should turn round, and be a spinning thing, ready always to face the wind; as light, therefore, as possible, and as vibratory; so that it is in no wise good for it to approximate itself to the nature of chalk cliffs.

Now observe how completely Turner has chosen his mill so as to mark this great fact of windmill nature; how high

[1] *Stanfield's Coast Scenery*, 1836, p. 25. Turner's "Windmill and Lock" was No. 27 in the *Liber*.

he has set it; how slenderly he has supported it; how he has built it all of wood; how he has bent the lower planks so as to give the idea of the building lapping over the pivot on which it rests inside; and how, finally, he has insisted on the great leverage of the beam behind it, while Stanfield's lever looks more like a prop than a thing to turn the roof with. And he has done all this fearlessly, though none of these elements of form are pleasant ones in themselves, but tend, on the whole, to give a somewhat mean and spider-like look to the principal feature in his picture; and then, finally, because he could not get the windmill dissected, and show us the real heart and centre of the whole, behold, he has put a pair of old millstones, *lying outside*, at the bottom of it. These—the first cause and motive of all the fabric—laid at its foundation; and beside them the cart which is to fulfil the end of the fabric's being, and take home the sacks of flour.

So far of what each painter chooses to draw. But do not fail also to consider the spirit in which it is drawn. Observe, that though all this ruin has befallen Stanfield's mill, Stanfield is not in the least sorry for it. On the contrary, he is delighted, and evidently thinks it the most fortunate thing possible. The owner is ruined, doubtless, or dead; but his mill forms an admirable object in our view of Brittany. So far from being grieved about it, we will make it our principal light;—if it were a fruit-tree in spring-blossom, instead of a desolate mill, we could not make it whiter or brighter; we illumine our whole picture with it, and exult over its every rent as a special treasure and possession.

Not so Turner. *His* mill is still serviceable; but, for all that, he feels somewhat pensive about it. It is a poor property, and evidently the owner of it has enough to do to get his own bread out from between its stones. Moreover, there is a dim type of all melancholy human labour in it, —catching the free winds, and setting them to turn grind-

stones. It is poor work for the winds; better, indeed, than drowning sailors or tearing down forests, but not their proper work of marshalling the clouds, and bearing the wholesome rains to the place where they are ordered to fall, and fanning the flowers and leaves when they are faint with heat. Turning round a couple of stones, for the mere pulverization of human food, is not noble work for the winds. So, also, of all low labour to which one sets human souls. It is better than no labour; and, in a still higher degree, better than destructive wandering of imagination; but yet that grinding in the darkness, for mere food's sake, must be melancholy work enough for many a living creature. All men have felt it so; and this grinding at the mill, whether it be breeze or soul that is set to it, we cannot much rejoice in. Turner has no joy of his mill. It shall be dark against the sky, yet proud, and on the hill-top; not ashamed of its labour, and brightened from beyond, the golden clouds stooping over it, and the calm summer sun going down behind, far away, to his rest.

STEEL-ENGRAVING

Cestus of Aglaia. Vol. XIX, pp. 90–93.

I SUPPOSE most people, looking at such a plate, fancy it is produced by some simple mechanical artifice, which is to drawing only what printing is to writing. They conclude, at all events, that there is something complacent, sympathetic, and helpful in the nature of steel; so that while a pen-and-ink sketch may always be considered an achievement proving cleverness in the sketcher, a sketch on steel comes out by mere favour of the indulgent metal: or that the plate is woven like a piece of pattern silk, and the pattern is

developed by pasteboard cards punched full of holes. Not so. Look close at that engraving—imagine it to be a drawing in pen and ink, and yourself required similarly to produce its parallel! True, the steel point has the one advantage of not blotting, but it has tenfold or twentyfold disadvantage, in that you cannot slur, nor efface, except in a very resolute and laborious way, nor play with it, nor even see what you are doing with it at the moment, far less the effect that is to be. You must *feel* what you are doing with it, and know precisely what you have got to do; how deep—how broad—how far apart—your lines must be, etc. and etc. (a couple of lines of etc.'s would not be enough to imply all you must know). But suppose the plate *were* only a pen drawing: take your pen—your finest—and just try to copy the leaves that entangle the nearest cow's head and the head itself; remembering always that the kind of work required here is mere child's play compared to that of fine figure engraving. Nevertheless, take a strong magnifying glass to this—count the dots and lines that gradate the nostrils and the edges of the facial bone; notice how the light is left on the top of the head by the stopping at its outline of the coarse touches which form the shadows under the leaves; examine it well, and then—I humbly ask of you—try to do a piece of it yourself! You clever sketcher—you young lady or gentleman of genius—you eye-glassed dilettante—you current writer of criticism royally plural,—I beseech you—do it yourself; do the merely etched outline yourself, if no more. Look you,—you hold your etching needle this way, as you would a pencil, nearly; and then,—you scratch with it! it is as easy as lying[1]. Or if you think that too difficult, take an easier piece;—take either of the light sprays of foliage that rise against the fortress on the right, put your glass over them—look how their fine outline is first drawn, leaf by leaf; then how the distant rock is put in

[1] *Hamlet*, Act iii, Sc. 2.

between, with broken lines; mostly stopping before they touch the leaf outline, and—again, I pray you, do it yourself; if not on that scale, on a larger. Go on into the hollows of the distant rock—traverse its thickets—number its towers[1]—count how many lines there are in a laurel bush—in an arch—in a casement: some hundred and fifty, or two hundred, deliberately drawn lines, you will find, in every square quarter of an inch;—say *three thousand to the inch*,—each with skilful intent put in its place! and then consider what the ordinary sketcher's work must appear to the men who have been trained to this!

"But might not more have been done by three thousand lines to a square inch?" you will perhaps ask. Well, possibly. It may be with lines as with soldiers: three hundred, knowing their work thoroughly, may be stronger than three thousand less sure of their game. We shall have to press close home this question about numbers and purpose presently;—it is not the question now. Supposing certain results required,—atmospheric effects, surface textures, transparencies of shade, confusions of light,—more could *not* be done with less. There are engravings of this modern school, of which, with respect to their particular aim, it may be said, most truly, they "*cannot* be better done."

Whether an engraving should aim at effects of atmosphere, may be disputable (just as also whether a sculptor should aim at effects of perspective); but I do not raise these points to-day. Admit the aim—let us note the patience; nor this in engraving only. I have taken an engraving for my instance, but I might have taken any form of Art. I call upon all good artists, painters, sculptors, metal-workers, to bear witness with me in what I now tell the public in their name,—that the same Fortitude, the same deliberation, the same perseverance in resolute act—is needed to do *anything* in Art that is worthy. And why is it, you workmen, that you

[1] Psalm xlviii. 12.

are silent always concerning your toil; and mock at us in your hearts, within that shrine at Eleusis, to the gate of which you have hewn your way through so deadly thickets of thorn; and leave us, foolish children, outside, in our conceited thinking either that we can enter it in play, or that we are grander for not entering? Far more earnestly is it to be asked, why do you *stoop* to us as you mock us? If your secrecy were a noble one,—if, in that incommunicant contempt, you wrought your own work with majesty, whether we would receive it or not, it were kindly, though ungraciously done; but now you make yourselves our toys, and do our childish will in servile silence. If engraving were to come to an end this day, and no guided point should press metal more, do you think it would be in a blaze of glory that your art would expire?—that those plates in the annuals, and black proofs in broad shop windows, are of a nobly monumental character,—"chalybe perennius[1]?"

EARLY READING

Praeterita (1). Vol. xxxv, pp. 13–15.

I AM, and my father was before me, a violent Tory of the old school:—Walter Scott's school, that is to say, and Homer's. I name these two out of the numberless great Tory writers, because they were my own two masters. I had Walter Scott's novels, and the *Iliad* (Pope's translation), for constant reading when I was a child, on week-days: on Sunday, their effect was tempered by *Robinson Crusoe* and the *Pilgrim's Progress*; my mother having it deeply in her heart to make an evangelical clergyman of me. Fortunately,

[1] "More lasting than steel": a reminiscence of Horace's line *monumentum aere perennius* (*Odes*, III. 30. 1).

I had an aunt more evangelical than my mother; and my aunt gave me cold mutton for Sunday's dinner, which—as I much preferred it hot—greatly diminished the influence of the *Pilgrim's Progress*; and the end of the matter was, that I got all the noble imaginative teaching of Defoe and Bunyan, and yet—am not an evangelical clergyman.

I had, however, still better teaching than theirs, and that compulsorily, and every day of the week.

Walter Scott and Pope's Homer were reading of my own election, and my mother forced me, by steady daily toil, to learn long chapters of the Bible by heart; as well as to read it every syllable through, aloud, hard names and all, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, about once a year: and to that discipline—patient, accurate, and resolute—I owe, not only a knowledge of the book, which I find occasionally serviceable, but much of my general power of taking pains, and the best part of my taste in literature. From Walter Scott's novels I might easily, as I grew older, have fallen to other people's novels; and Pope might, perhaps, have led me to take Johnson's English, or Gibbon's, as types of language; but, once knowing the 32nd of Deuteronomy, the 119th Psalm, the 15th of 1st Corinthians, the Sermon on the Mount, and most of the Apocalypse, every syllable by heart, and having always a way of thinking with myself what words meant, it was not possible for me, even in the foolishest times of youth, to write entirely superficial or formal English; and the affectation of trying to write like Hooker[1] and George Herbert[2] was the most innocent I could have fallen into.

From my own chosen masters, then, Scott and Homer, I learned the Toryism which my best after-thought has only served to confirm.

[1] Richard Hooker (1554–1600), theologian, and writer of *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.

[2] George Herbert (1593–1633), sacred poet and parish priest.

That is to say, a most sincere love of kings, and dislike of everybody who attempted to disobey them. Only, both by Homer and Scott, I was taught strange ideas about kings, which I find for the present much obsolete; for I perceived that both the author of the *Iliad* and the author of *Waverley* made their kings, or king-loving persons, do harder work than anybody else. Tydides or Idomeneus[1] always killed twenty Trojans to other people's one, and Redgauntlet speared more salmon than any of the Solway fishermen; and—which was particularly a subject of admiration to me—I observed that they not only did more, but in proportion to their doings *got* less, than other people—nay, that the best of them were even ready to govern for nothing! and let their followers divide any quantity of spoil or profit. Of late it has seemed to me that the idea of a king has become exactly the contrary of this, and that it has been supposed the duty of superior persons generally to govern less, and get more, than anybody else. So that it was, perhaps, quite as well that in those early days my contemplation of existent kingship was a very distant one.

BIBLE READING

Praeterita (1). Vol. XXXV, pp. 40–42.

I HAVE next with deeper gratitude to chronicle what I owe to my mother for the resolutely consistent lessons which so exercised me in the Scriptures as to make every word of them familiar to my ear in habitual music,—yet in that familiarity reverenced, as transcending all thought, and ordaining all conduct.

This she effected, not by her own sayings or personal

[1] Homeric heroes.

authority; but simply by compelling me to read the book thoroughly, for myself. As soon as I was able to read with fluency, she began a course of Bible work with me, which never ceased till I went to Oxford. She read alternate verses with me, watching, at first, every intonation of my voice, and correcting the false ones, till she made me understand the verse, if within my reach, rightly, and energetically. It might be beyond me altogether; that she did not care about; but she made sure that as soon as I got hold of it at all, I should get hold of it by the right end.

In this way she began with the first verse of Genesis, and went straight through, to the last verse of the Apocalypse; hard names, numbers, Levitical law, and all; and began again at Genesis the next day. If a name was hard, the better the exercise in pronunciation,—if a chapter was tiresome, the better lesson in patience,—if loathsome, the better lesson in faith that there was some use in its being so outspoken. After our chapters, (from two to three a day, according to their length, the first thing after breakfast, and no interruption from servants allowed,—none from visitors, who either joined in the reading or had to stay upstairs,—and none from any visitings or excursions, except real travelling,) I had to learn a few verses by heart, or repeat, to make sure I had not lost, something of what was already known; and, with the chapters thus gradually possessed from the first word to the last, I had to learn the whole body of the fine old Scottish paraphrases, which are good, melodious, and forceful verse; and to which, together with the Bible itself, I owe the first cultivation of my ear sound.

It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother thus taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which was, to my child's mind, chiefly repulsive—the 119th Psalm—has now become of all the most precious to me, in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the

Law of God, in opposition to the abuse of it by modern preachers of what they imagine to be His gospel.

But it is only by deliberate effort that I recall the long morning hours of toil, as regular as sunrise,—toil on both sides equal—by which, year after year, my mother forced me to learn these paraphrases, and chapters, (the eighth of 1st Kings being one—try it, good reader, in a leisure hour!) allowing not so much as a syllable to be missed or misplaced; while every sentence was required to be said over and over again till she was satisfied with the accent of it. I recollect a struggle between us of about three weeks, concerning the accent of the "of" in the lines

> "Shall any following spring revive
> The ashes of the urn?"[1]—

I insisting, partly in childish obstinacy, and partly in true instinct for rhythm, (being wholly careless on the subject both of urns and their contents,) on reciting it with an accented *of*. It was not, I say, till after three weeks' labour, that my mother got the accent lightened on the "of" and laid on the ashes, to her mind. But had it taken three years she would have done it, having once undertaken to do it. And, assuredly, had she not done it,—well, there's no knowing what would have happened; but I'm very thankful she *did*.

READING AND WRITING

Praeterita (2). Vol. xxxv, pp. 366–369.

I SEE that in the earlier passages of this too dimly explicit narrative, no notice is taken of the uses of Shakespeare at Herne Hill, other than that he used to lie upon the table; nor can I the least trace his influence on my own mind or

[1] John Logan, in one of the Scottish Church Paraphrases.

work, except as a part of the great reality and infinity of the world itself, and its gradually unfolding history and law. To my father, and to Richard Gray[1], the characters of Shakespearian comedy were all familiar personal friends; my mother's refusal to expose herself to theatric temptation began in her having fallen in love, for some weeks, when she was a girl, with Henry the Fifth at the Battle of Agincourt; nor can I remember in my own childhood any time when the plots of the great plays were unknown to me, or—I write the word now with more than surprise—misunderstood! I thought and felt about all of them then, just as I think and feel now; no character, small or great, has taken a new aspect to me; and the attentive reading which began first at Macugnaga[2] meant only the discovery of a more perfect truth, or a deeper passion, in the words that had before rung in my ears with too little questioned melody. As for the full contents of any passage, or any scene, I never expected, nor expect, to know them, any more than every rock of Skiddaw, or flower of Jura.

But by the light of the little window at Macugnaga, and by the murmur of the stream beneath it, began the courses of study which led me into fruitful thought out of the till then passive sensation of merely artistic or naturalist life; and which have made of me—or at least I fain would believe the friends who tell me so—a useful teacher, instead of a vain labourer.

From that time forward, nearly all serious reading was done while I was abroad; the heaviest box in the boot being always full of dictionaries; and my Denmark Hill life resolved itself into the drudgery of authorship and press correction, with infinite waste of time in saying the same things over and over to the people who came to see our Turners.

[1] The father of Euphemia Gray, Ruskin's wife.
[2] In the Alps, near Monte Rosa.

In calling my authorship, drudgery, I do not mean that writing ever gave me the kind of pain of which Carlyle so wildly complains,—to my total amazement and boundless puzzlement, be it in passing said; for he talked just as vigorously as he wrote, and the book he makes bitterest moan over, *Friedrich*, bears the outer aspect of richly enjoyed gossip, and lovingly involuntary eloquence of description or praise. My own literary work, on the contrary, was always done as quietly and methodically as a piece of tapestry. I knew exactly what I had got to say, put the words firmly in their places like so many stitches, hemmed the edges of chapters round with what seemed to me graceful flourishes, touched them finally with my cunningest points of colour, and read the work to papa and mamma at breakfast next morning, as a girl shows her sampler.

"Drudgery" may be a hard word for this often complacent, and entirely painless occupation; still, the best that could be said for it, was that it gave me no serious trouble; and I should think the pleasure of driving, to a good coachman, of ploughing, to a good farmer, much more of dressmaking, to an inventive and benevolent modiste, must be greatly more piquant than the most proudly ardent hours of book-writing have ever been to me, or as far as my memory ranges, to any conscientious author of merely average power. How great work is done, under what burden of sorrow, or with what expense of life, has not been told hitherto, nor is likely to be; the best of late time has been done recklessly or contemptuously. Byron would burn a canto if a friend disliked it, and Scott spoil a story to please a bookseller.

As I have come on the extremely minor question of my own work, I may once for all complete all necessary account of it by confession of my evermore childish delight in beginning a drawing; and usually acute misery in trying to finish one. People sometimes praise me as industrious, when they count the number of printed volumes which

Mr Allen can now advertise. But the biography of the waste pencilling and passionately forsaken colouring, heaped in the dusty corners of Brantwood, if I could write it, would be far more pathetically exemplary or admonitory.

And as I transpose myself back through the forty years of desultory, yet careful, reading, which began in my mossy cell of Macugnaga, it becomes a yet more pertinent question to me how much life has been also wasted in that manner, and what was not wasted, extremely weakened and saddened. Very certainly, *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar* did not in the least cheer or strengthen my heart in its Monte-Rosean solitude; and as I try to follow the clue of Shakespearian power over me since, I cannot feel that it has been anywise wholesome for me to have the world represented as a place where, for that best sort of people, everything always goes wrong; or to have my conceptions of that best sort of people so much confused by images of the worst. To have kinghood represented, in the Shakespearian cycle, by Richards II and III instead of I, by Henrys IV and VIII instead of II; by King John, finished into all truths of baseness and grief, while Henry V is only a king of fairy tale; or in the realm of imagination, by the folly of Lear, the cruelty of Leontes, the furious and foul guilt of Macbeth and the Dane. Why must the persons of Iago and Iachimo, of Tybalt and Edmund, of Isabel's brother and Helena's lord, pollute, or wither with their shadows, every happy scene in the loveliest plays; and they, the loveliest, be all mixed and encumbered with languid and common work,—to one's best hope spurious, certainly, so far as original, idle and disgraceful?—and all so inextricably and mysteriously that the writer himself is not only unknowable, but inconceivable; and his wisdom so useless, that at this time of being and speaking, among active and purposeful Englishmen, I know not one who shows a trace of ever having felt a passion of Shakespeare's, or learnt a lesson from him.

PSALMS

Rock Honeycomb. Vol. XXXI, pp. 105–107.

Sunday, *9th July*, 1876.

YESTERDAY evening, one of the sweetest and brightest of this hitherto sweet summer, the "Coniston band," consisting of the musically minded working men of the village, rowed itself, for its "Saturday at e'en" delectation, into the middle of the lake; and, floating just between Brantwood and the "Hall," on the opposite shore, where Sir Philip Sidney[1], it is delivered by tradition, lived for a time, with his sister, in our Arcadia of western meres[2],—poured forth divers pipings and trumpetings, with meritorious endeavour, and, I doubt not, real, innocent, and useful pleasure to itself, and to the village hearers on the opposite green shore.

Mostly, polka music, with occasional sublimities—"My Maryland," and "God save the Emperor," and the like; —pleasant enough, sometimes, to hear, from this shore also: but, as it chanced, yesterday, very destructive of my comfort in showing the bright roses and deep purple foxgloves on my banks to two guests, for whom the flowers and the evening light were good; but gay music, not so.

And it might, with little pains, have been much otherwise; for if, instead of a somewhat briefly exercised band, playing on trumpets and shawms[3], concerning a Maryland of which they probably did not know either the place or the history, and an Emperor, a proposal for whose instant expulsion

1 Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586), courtier and poet, author of *Arcadia*, a poetical romance, written in 1580 and published after his death.

2 Ruskin believed Westmoreland to be derived from West-mere-land.

3 Psalm xcviii. 7.

from his dominions would have been probably received with as much applause in the alehouse, as the prayer that God would save him, upon the lake;—if I say, instead of this tuneful, and occasionally out-of-tuneful, metallic noise, produced, with little meaning beyond the noise itself, by the fathers of the village, a few clearly understood and rightly intended words had been chanted for us in harmony by the children of it;—suppose, for instance, in truly trained concord and happy understanding, such words as these of Sir Philip Sidney's own, echoed back from the tender ruin of the walls that had been his home, and rising to the fair mountain heaven, which is still alike his home and ours;—

"From snare the fowler lays
He shall thee sure untye;
The noisome blast that plaguing strays
Untoucht, shall pass thee by.
Soft hived with wing and plume
Thou in his shroud shall lie,
And on his truth no less presume
Than in his shield affy[1],"

the July sunset would not have been less happy to the little choir, and the peace of it would have been deepened for those to whom it could bring happiness no more.

"Is any among you afflicted?—let him pray. Is any merry?—let him sing psalms[2]."

The entire simplicity and literalness of this command of the first Bishop of the Christian Church cannot, of course, be now believed, in the midst of our luxurious art of the oratorio, and dramatically modulated speeches of Moses in Egypt, and Elijah on Carmel. But the command is, nevertheless, as kind and wise as it is simple; and if ever Old England again becomes Merry England, the first use she will make of her joyful lips, will be to sing psalms.

[1] Sir Philip Sidney's paraphrase of Psalm xci. affy = trust; cf. "affiance."

[2] James v. 13.

HYMNS

Rock Honeycomb. Vol. xxxi, pp. 114–116.

Modern writers of devotional rhyme always assume, that if the thing which David (or other original writer to be paraphrased) said, cannot be conveniently arranged in their own quatrain, or whatever the stanza may be,—a piece of David's saying may be cut off, and a piece of their own or any other pious person's saying, fastened on, without any harm: their object being only to obtain such a concatenation of pious sayings as may, on the whole, be sung without offence, and by their pleasant sound soothe and refresh the congregation after kneeling till they are stiff. But the idea of any of these melodious sentiments being really *adopted* by the singers, and meant as a true assertion, never for a moment enters the composer's head. Thus, in my own parish church, only the Sunday before last, the whole congregation, and especially the children, sang, in great glee and contentment, a hymn which declared their extreme eagerness to die, and be immediately with God: but if, in the course of the tune, the smallest bit of plaster had fallen from the ceiling, implying any degree of instability in the rafters thereof, very certainly the whole symphonious company would have scuttled out as fast as they could; and a prophetic intimation, conveyed to any of the mothers of the curly-haired children sitting by the altar, that their own darling was never again to be seen in that place, would as certainly have spoiled the mother's singing of the devotional exercise appointed for her that afternoon. God be thanked that it would.

Again, I observe that among the canticles which might be supposed, without absurdity, really more or less to be expressive of the feelings of a village congregation, a favourite one, founded on the promise that when two or

three are gathered in the name of Christ, He is in the midst of them, closes with the following invocation:—

> "Lord, we are few, but thou art near;
> Nor short thine arm, nor deaf thine ear!
> Oh, rend the heavens,—come quickly down,
> And make a thousand hearts thine own[1]."

Which charming stanza is apparently sung with great unction by everybody; and it never seems to occur to any of their minds that if Christ is in the midst of them, there is no occasion for His arm to be long, and still less for His rending the heavens to come down to them; or that although a thousand hearts may be a sonorous phrase for the end of a stanza, it is not what most people would understand by a "few" and still less a parallel for Christ's expression "two or three[2]." The fact being that the poor rhymester, totally incapable of conceiving the nearness of the being of Christ at all, or any emotion whatever which would be caused by either, fills up his idle verses with the first phrases that jingle into his jaded asses' ears out of the prophecies of Isaiah, though the first, concerning the shortened arm of God, was written for people so far from having Christ in the midst of them, that their iniquities had entirely separated them from Him, and their sins hidden His face (Isaiah lix. 1, 2); and the second is an appeal by the prophet for the descent of God, not among His friends, but against His adversaries, that the nations might "tremble at His presence" (Isaiah lxiv. 1, 2).

The entire system of modern English canticle is thus half paralytic, half profane, consisting partly of the expression of what the singers never in their lives felt, or attempted to feel; and partly in the address of prayers to God, which nothing could more disagreeably astonish them than His attending to.

[1] Hymns Ancient and Modern, No. 529 ("Jesus, where'er Thy people meet"): by Cowper.

[2] See Matthew xviii. 20.

THE HOMES OF SCOTT

Fors Clavigera. Vol. XXIX, pp. 461–465.

As I drove from Abbotsford to Ashestiel[1], Tweed and Ettrick were both in flood; not dun nor wrathful, but in the clear fulness of their perfect strength: and from the bridge of Ettrick I saw the two streams join, and the Tweed for miles down the vale, and the Ettrick for miles up among his hills,—each of them in the multitude of their windless waves, a march of infinite light, dazzling,—interminable, —intervaled indeed with eddies of shadow, but, for the most part, gliding paths of sunshine, far-swept beside the green glow of their level inches, the blessing of them, and the guard:—the stately moving of the many waters, more peaceful than their calm, only mighty, their rippled spaces fixed like orient clouds, their pools of pausing current binding the silver edges with a gloom of amber and gold; and all along their shore, beyond the sward, and the murmurous shingle, processions of dark forest, in strange majesty of sweet order, and unwounded grace of glorious age.

The house of Ashestiel itself is only three or four miles above this junction of Tweed and Ettrick. It has been sorrowfully changed since Sir Walter's death, but the essential make and set of the former building can still be traced. There is more excuse for Scott's flitting to Abbotsford than I had guessed, for *this* house stands, conscious of the river rather than commanding it, on a brow of meadowy bank, falling so steeply to the water that nothing can be seen of it from the windows. Beyond, the pasture-land rises steep three or four hundred feet against the northern sky, while behind the house, south and east, the moorlands lift themselves in gradual distance to still greater height,

[1] Sir Walter Scott's house before he moved to Abbotsford.

so that virtually neither sunrise nor sunset can be seen from the deep-nested dwelling. A tricklet of stream wavers to and fro down to it from the moor, through a grove of entirely natural wood,—oak, birch, and ash, fantastic and bewildering, but nowhere gloomy, or decayed, and carpeted with anemone. Between this wild avenue and the house, the old garden remains as it used to be, large, gracious, and tranquil; its high walls swept round it in a curving line like a war rampart, following the ground; the fruit-trees, trained a century since, now with grey trunks a foot wide, flattened to the wall like sheets of crag; the strong bars of their living trellis charged, when I saw them, with clusters of green-gage, soft bloomed into gold and blue; and of orange-pink magnum bonum, and crowds of ponderous pear, countless as leaves. Some open space of grass and path, now all redesigned for modern needs, must always have divided the garden from what was properly the front of the house, where the main entrance is now, between advanced wings, of which only the westward one is of Sir Walter's time: its ground floor being the drawing-room, with his own bedroom of equal size above, cheerful and luminous both, enfilading the house front with their large side windows, which commanded the sweep of Tweed down the valley, and some high masses of Ettrick Forest beyond, this view being now mostly shut off by the opposite wing, added for symmetry! But Sir Walter saw it fair through the morning clouds when he rose, holding himself, nevertheless, altogether regardless of it, when once at work. At Ashestiel and Abbotsford alike, his work-room is strictly a writing-office, what windows they have being designed to admit the needful light, with an extremely narrow vista of the external world. Courtyard at Abbotsford, and bank of young wood beyond: nothing at Ashestiel but the green turf of the opposite fells with the sun on it, if sun there were, and silver specks of passing sheep.

The room itself, Scott's true "memorial" if the Scotch people had heart enough to know him, or remember, is a small parlour on the ground-floor of the north side of the house, some twelve feet deep by eleven wide; the single window little more than four feet square, or rather four feet *cube*, above the desk, which is set in the recess of the mossy wall, the light thus entering in front of the writer, and reflected a little from each side. This window is set to the left in the end wall, leaving a breadth of some five feet or a little more on the fireplace side, where now, brought here from Abbotsford, stands the garden chair of the last days.

Contentedly, in such space and splendour of domicile, the three great poems[1] were written, *Waverley* begun; and all the make and tenure of his mind confirmed, as it was to remain, or revive, through after time of vanity, trouble, and decay.

A small chamber, with a fair world outside:—such are the conditions, as far as I know or can gather, of all greatest and best mental work. At heart, the monastery cell always, changed sometimes, for special need, into the prison cell. But, as I meditate more and more closely what reply I may safely make to the now eagerly pressed questioning of my faithful scholars, what books I would have them read, I find the first broadly-swept definition may be—Books written in the country. None worth spending time on, and few that are quite safe to touch, have been written in towns.

And my next narrowing definition would be, Books that have good music in them,—that are rightly-rhythmic: a definition which includes the delicacy of perfect prose, such as Scott's; and which *ex*cludes at once a great deal of modern poetry, in which a dislocated and convulsed versifi-

[1] The *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, and the *Lady of the Lake*.

cation has been imposed on the ear in the attempt to express uneven temper, and unprincipled feeling.

By unprincipled feeling, I mean whatever part of passion the writer does not clearly discern for right or wrong, and concerning which he betrays the reader's moral judgment into false sympathy or compassion. No really great writer ever does so: neither Scott, Burns, nor Byron ever waver for an instant, any more than Shakespeare himself, in their estimate of what is fit and honest, or harmful and base. Scott always punishes even error, how much more fault, to the uttermost; nor does Byron, in his most defiant and mocking moods, ever utter a syllable that defames virtue or disguises sin.

In looking back to my former statement in the third volume of *Modern Painters*, of the influence of natural scenery on these three men, I was unjust both to it and to them, in my fear of speaking too favourably of passions with which I had myself so strong personal sympathy. Recent Vandalism has taught me, too cruelly, and too late, the moral value of such scenes as those in which I was brought up; and given it me, for my duty to the future, to teach the Love of the fair Universe around us as the beginning of Piety, and the end of Learning.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Modern Painters (3). Vol. v, pp. 331–332, 333, 335–339.

I BELIEVE the first test of a truly great man is his humility I do not mean, by humility, doubt of his own power, or hesitation in speaking his opinions; but a right understanding of the relation between what *he* can do and say, and the rest of the world's sayings and doings. All great men not only

know their business, but usually know that they know it; and are not only right in their main opinions, but they usually know that they are right in them; only, they do not think much of themselves on that account. Arnolfo[1] knows he can build a good dome at Florence; Albert Dürer[2] writes calmly to one who had found fault with his work, "It cannot be better done"; Sir Isaac Newton knows that he has worked out a problem or two that would have puzzled anybody else,—only they do not expect their fellow-men therefore to fall down and worship them; they have a curious under-sense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not *in* them, but *through* them; that they could not do or be anything else than God made them. And they see something Divine and God-made in every other man they meet, and are endlessly, foolishly, incredibly merciful.

Now, I find among the men of the present age, as far as I know them, this character in Scott and Turner pre-eminently; I am not sure if it is not in them alone. I do not find Scott talking about the dignity of literature, nor Turner about the dignity of painting. They do their work feeling that they cannot well help it; the story must be told, and the effect put down; and if people like it, well and good; and if not, the world will not be much the worse....

Then, as touching the kind of work done by these two men, the more I think of it I find this conclusion more impressed upon me,—that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to *see* something, and tell what it *saw* in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion,—all in one....

[1] Arnolfo di Cambio, architect, began to build the Cathedral of Florence in 1274.

[2] Albert Dürer, of Nuremberg, craftsman, engraver and painter, 1471–1528.

Having cast metaphysical writers out of our way, and sentimental writers into the second rank, I do not think Scott's supremacy among those who remain will any more be doubtful; nor would it, perhaps, have been doubtful before, had it not been encumbered by innumerable faults and weaknesses. But it is pre-eminently in these faults and weaknesses that Scott is the representative of the mind of his age; and because he is the greatest man born amongst us, and intended for the enduring type of us, all our principal faults must be laid on his shoulders, and he must bear down the dark marks to the latest ages; while the smaller men, who have some special work to do, perhaps not so much belonging to this age as leading out of it to the next, are often kept providentially quit of the encumbrances which they had not strength to sustain, and are much smoother and pleasanter to look at, in their way: only that is a smaller way.

Thus, the most startling fault of the age being its faithlessness, it is necessary that its greatest man should be faithless. Nothing is more notable or sorrowful in Scott's mind than its incapacity of steady belief in anything. He cannot even resolve hardily to believe in a ghost, or water-spirit; always explains them away in an apologetic manner, not believing, all the while, even in his own explanation. He never can clearly ascertain whether there is anything behind the arras but rats; never draws sword and thrusts at it for life or death; but goes on looking at it timidly, and saying, "It must be the wind." He is educated a Presbyterian, and remains one, because it is the most sensible thing he can do if he is to live in Edinburgh; but he thinks Romanism more picturesque, and profaneness more gentlemanly; does not see that anything affects human life but love, courage, and destiny; which are, indeed, not matters of faith at all, but of sight. Any gods but those are very misty in outline to him; and when the love is laid ghastly

in poor Charlotte's coffin[1]; and the courage is no more of use,—the pen having fallen from between the fingers; and destiny is sealing the scroll,—the God-light is dim in the tears that fall on it.

He is in all this the epitome of his epoch.

Again: as another notable weakness of the age is its habit of looking back, in a romantic and passionate idleness, to the past ages, not understanding them all the while, nor really desiring to understand them, so Scott gives up nearly the half of his intellectual power to a fond, yet purposeless, dreaming over the past, and spends half his literary labours in endeavours to revive it, not in reality, but on the stage of fiction; endeavours which were the best of the kind that modernism made, but still successful only so far as Scott put, under the old armour, the everlasting human nature which he knew; and totally unsuccessful, so far as concerned the painting of the armour itself, which he knew *not*. The excellence of Scott's work is precisely in proportion to the degree in which it is sketched from present nature. His familiar life is inimitable; his quiet scenes of introductory conversation, as the beginning of *Rob Roy* and *Redgauntlet*, and all his living Scotch characters, mean or noble, from Andrew Fairservice to Jeanie Deans, are simply right, and can never be bettered. But his romance and antiquarianism, his knighthood and monkery, are all false, and he knows them to be false; does not care to make them earnest; enjoys them for their strangeness, but laughs at his own antiquarianism, all through his own third novel,—with exquisite modesty indeed, but with total misunderstanding of the function of an Antiquary. He does not see how anything is to be got out of the past but confusion, old iron on drawing-room chairs, and serious inconvenience to Dr Heavysterne[2].

[1] Sir Walter Scott's wife who died in 1826. See Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, ch. 70.

[2] See ch. iii of *The Antiquary*.

Again: more than any age that had preceded it, ours had been ignorant of the meaning of the word "Art." It had not a single fixed principle, and what unfixed principles it worked upon were all wrong. It was necessary that Scott should know nothing of art. He neither cared for painting nor sculpture, and was totally incapable of forming a judgment about them. He had some confused love of Gothic architecture, because it was dark, picturesque, old, and like nature; but could not tell the worst from the best, and built for himself perhaps the most incongruous and ugly pile that gentlemanly modernism ever designed; marking, in the most curious and subtle way, that mingling of reverence with irreverence which is so striking in the age; he reverences Melrose, yet casts one of its piscinas, puts a modern steel grate into it, and makes it his fireplace. Like all pure moderns, he supposes the Gothic barbarous, notwithstanding his love of it; admires, in an equally ignorant way, totally opposite styles; is delighted with the new town of Edinburgh; mistakes its dulness for purity of taste, and actually compares it, in its deathful formality of street, as contrasted with the rudeness of the old town, to Britomart taking off her armour[1].

Again: as in reverence and irreverence, so in levity and melancholy, we saw that the spirit of the age was strangely interwoven. Therefore, also, it is necessary that Scott should be light, careless, unearnest, and yet eminently sorrowful. Throughout all his work there is no evidence of any purpose but to while away the hour. His life had no other object than the pleasure of the instant, and the establishing of a family name. All his thoughts were, in their outcome and end, less than nothing, and vanity. And yet, of all poetry that I know, none is so sorrowful as Scott's. Other great masters are pathetic in a resolute and predetermined way, when they choose; but in their own minds, are evidently

[1] *Marmion*: Introduction to Canto V.

stern or hopeful, or serene; never really melancholy. Even Byron is rather sulky and desperate than melancholy; Keats is sad because he is sickly; Shelley because he is impious; but Scott is inherently and consistently sad. Around all his power, and brightness, and enjoyment of eye and heart, the far away Æolian knell is for ever sounding; there is not one of those loving or laughing glances of his but it is brighter for the film of tears; his mind is like one of his own hill rivers,—it is white, and flashes in the sun fairly, careless, as it seems, and hasty in its going, but

> Far beneath, where slow they creep
> From pool to eddy, dark and deep,
> Where alders moist, and willows weep,
> You hear her streams repine[1].

Life begins to pass from him very early; and while Homer sings cheerfully in his blindness, and Dante retains his courage, and rejoices in hope of Paradise, through all his exile, Scott, yet hardly past his youth, lies pensive in the sweet sunshine and among the harvests of his native hills.

> Blackford[2], on whose uncultured breast,
> Among the broom, and thorn, and whin,
> A truant boy, I sought the nest,
> Or listed as I lay at rest,
> While rose on breezes thin
> The murmur of the city crowd,
> And, from his steeple jangling loud,
> St Giles's mingling din!
> Now, from the summit to the plain,
> Waves all the hill with yellow grain;
> And on the landscape as I look,
> Naught do I see unchanged remain,
> Save the rude cliffs and chiming brook;
> To me they make a heavy moan
> Of early friendships past and gone[3].

[1] *Marmion*, IV. 10. [2] A hill near Edinburgh.
[3] *Marmion*, IV. 24.

Such, then, were the weaknesses which it was necessary that Scott should share with his age, in order that he might sufficiently represent it, and such the grounds for supposing him, in spite of all these weaknesses, the greatest literary man whom that age produced.

XENOPHON'S *ECONOMICUS*

Bibliotheca Pastorum. Vol. XXXI, pp. 26–29.

Now the especial interest of the Arcadian life of Xenophon[1] (presented in this book) to the English reader, consists in its being precisely intermediate between the warrior heroism of nascent Greece, and the home-heroism of pacified Christendom in its happiest days.

And his mind represents the Greek intellect at the exact time when all fantastic and disordered imagination had been chastised in its faith; leaving only a firm trust in the protection, belief in the oracles, and joy in the presence, of justly venerated Gods: no wantonly indulged rationalism having yet degraded the nobles of the race of Æschylus, into scornful mockers at the Fear of their Fathers. And it represents the Greek moral temper at the exact moment when keen thought, and cruel experience, having alike taught to its warrior pride the duty and the gladness of peace, the soldier could lay down the helmet that his children might play with its plume[2], and harness his chariot-horses to the plough,—without ceasing himself, from the knightly self-denials of his order; or yielding for a moment to the lascivious charms, and ignoble terrors, with which peaceful life must be corrupted in those who have never held frank companionship with attendant Death.

[1] Xenophon, historian, essayist and military commander (435–354 B.C.), lived for twenty years in Arcadia as a country gentleman.

[2] Homer's *Iliad*, VI. 467 ff.

Written towards the term of days past in this majestic temperance, the book now in your hands will be found to contain three statements of most precious truths;—statements complete and clear beyond any others extant in classic literature.

It contains, first, a faultless definition of Wealth[1], and explanation of its dependence for efficiency on the merits and faculties of its possessor;—definition which cannot be bettered; and which must be the foundation of all true Political Economy among nations, as Euclid is to all time the basis of Geometry.

This book contains, secondly, the most perfect ideal of kingly character and kingly government[2] given in literature known to me, either by poet or philosopher. For Ulysses is merely chief Shepherd, his kingdom is too small to exhibit any form of extended discipline: St Louis is merely chief Pilgrim, and abdicates his reign on earth[3]. Henry the Fifth is merely chief Captain, and has scarcely any idea of inferior orders or objects of authority. But this Cyrus of Persia, himself faultless, conceives and commands a faultless order of State powers, widely extended, yet incapable in their very nature of lawless increase, or extension too great for the organic and active power of the sustaining life:—the State being one human body, not a branched, coralline, semi-mortified mass.

And this ideal of government is not only the best yet written, but, as far as may be judged, the best conceivable; all advance on it can only be by filling in its details, or adapting it to local accidents; the form of it cannot be changed, being one of dreadless Peace, inoffensive to others, and at unity in itself.

[1] Xen. *Ec.* 1, § 7. The definition is that a man's wealth is everything that benefits him, and that whatever injures him is loss rather than property.

[2] The description of the life and work of Cyrus, king of Persia.

[3] Louis IX of France (1215–1270), a great crusader.

Nor is there any visible image of modest and mighty knighthood either painted or written since, which can be set for an instant beside that of Cyrus in his garden. It has the inherent strength of Achilles, the external refinement of Louis XIV[1], the simplicity of the household of Jesse, and the magnificence of Haroun Alraschid[2], all gathered into vital unison by the philosophy of Lycurgus[3].

Lastly, and chiefly, this book contains the ideal of domestic life; describing in sweet detail the loving help of two equal helpmates, lord and lady: their methods of dominion over their household; of instruction, after dominion is secure; and of laying up stores in due time for distribution in due measure. Like the ideal of stately knighthood, this ideal of domestic life cannot be changed; nor can it be amended, but in addition of more variously applicable detail, and enlargement of the range of the affections, by the Christian hope of their eternal duration.

Such are the chief contents of the book, presented with extreme simplicity of language and modesty of heart; gentle qualities which in truth add to its preciousness, yet have hitherto hindered its proper influence in our schools, because presenting no model of grace in style, or force in rhetoric. It is simply the language of an educated soldier and country gentleman, relating without effort what he has seen, and without pride what he has learned. But for the greater number of us, this is indeed the most exemplary manner of writing. To emulate the intricate strength of Thucydides, or visionary calm of Plato, is insolent, as vain, for men of ordinary minds; but any sensible person may state what he has ascertained, and describe what he has felt, in unpretending terms, like these of Xenophon; and will

[1] Louis XIV, le Grand Monarque (1638–1715), whose court was proverbial for its splendour.

[2] The Caliph of the *Arabian Nights*.

[3] Lycurgus (820 B.C.), lawgiver of Sparta.

assuredly waste his life, or impair its usefulness, in attempting to write otherwise. Nor is it without some proper and intentional grace that the art of which the author boasts the universal facility of attainment, should be taught in homely words, and recommended by simple arguments.

THE BIRTHPLACE OF ST BERNARD

Valle Crucis. Vol. XXXIII, pp. 247–249

THE name of his[1] birthplace you may easily remember; and the spot of it you may reach, by no toilsome, no irrational pilgrimage.

But two short miles to the north of Dijon, only just far enough to detach them completely from the new suburban city, rise the little hill and village of La Fontaine. Mound, rather than hill, it should be called; an outlier of the thin-bedded Jura limestone which forms all the long côteau to the west of Dijon and Mâcon. Steep enough the little mound, almost craggy on one side, sloping down on the other with its rough-built village some 150 feet into the plain, but completely insulated, and the summit of it not more than a furlong square, occupied by a small farm-house, and its yet smaller garden. Farmhouse built more or less out of the ruins of the older château, itself also now in process of demolition, or readjustment to a modern chapel, enlarging from the recess behind the altar, which occupies the exact site of the room in which St Bernard was born.

[1] St Bernard (1090–1153), Cistercian monk, and Abbot of Clairvaux; writer of theological works and many well-known hymns, such as "Jesu, the very thought of Thee."

Feudal castle it was, remember: no stone of it now left on another; but you may stand at the edge of the little garden, on the rock where his childish feet first stood firm; the simple kinds of the wild flowers he knew still nestle, or wander, there, unchanged; the soft dingles of the Côte d'Or cast still the same shadows in the morning light; eastward, the cliffs and folds of Jura, and the one white cloud beyond, that never fades;—all these were, of his life, the same part that they are of ours; how far his work and thoughts are still to be with *us*, can scarcely be judged well, here in our London circus; you would judge of them otherwise, I believe, in looking from his native rock down the vast vale of the Saône, where, only fifteen miles to the south, the lines of poplar and aspen that soften the horizon, grow by the idle streams of what was once—Cîteaux.

Nothing is left of the abbey walls; a modern industrial school occupies their site. The only vestige left of times even a little separated from our own is a, literally, moated grange, where a wide pond, almost a lake of absolutely quiet water, lulled among its reeds, is deep round the foundation stones of a granary, outbuilding once of *the* Cistercian[1] farm.

The first brothers who settled there, those from the abbey of Molesmes, had hard times for many a day. The marshes would not drain, the seeds would not grow; the monks themselves died, one by one, of damp and fatigue. They had to rise at two in the morning for matins; it was not right to go to sleep again afterwards,—they were required to meditate till dawn, but I suppose, by Heaven's grace, sometimes nodded. They had to work with strength of hand seven hours a day, at one time or another. Dined at twelve; no animal food allowed except in sickness, and only a pound and a half of bread; vegetables, I suppose, what they would, except on fast days,—total, twice a week, as far as I can make out. Common human blood could not stand it; the

[1] A monastic order, founded by St Bernard.

marsh of Cîteaux was too deadly for them, and they died, and died, nameless people, foolish people, what you choose to call them,—yet they died for you, and for your children.

At last Bernard heard of them—then a youth, just back from Paris University. Gathered a few more fiery ones, of his own sort, and plunged into the marsh to the rescue. The poor Abbot and his forlorn hope of friars went out to meet them, singing songs of deliverance. In less than twenty-five years there were more than sixty thousand Cistercian monks, at work on any bit of trenchable ground they were allowed to come at, between the bay of Genoa and the Baltic.

Trenchable ground, I say, with intention; for there were two things, mind you, that the Cistercians always wanted: the *ground* on which they could do most good; the *water* with which they could do most work. Therefore in England you always find the monastery at the point of the valley where the stream first becomes manageable on the level, and yet where the mill-wheel would still turn merrily.

Only, the defect of the whole institution to my own poor mind is, that you get the mill indeed, and the miller, but not the miller's daughter! And in that degree I own myself still a bigoted Protestant,—that Mysie Happer[1] seems to me a most laudable adjunct to the Cistercian economy, and that I can imagine benighted persons who would be much better helped by the good heart and good looks of Mysie than by any higher images of the Queen of the Angels. Howbeit, whatever good there may be for persons of higher temperament, in Madonnas del Sisto or del Cardellino[2], of course it is St Bernard who begins all that for them, with the rest of his beginnings.

In 1090 he is born at La Fontaine, and whatever is loveliest in chivalry and ladyhood comes after that. You

[1] The miller's daughter, in Scott's *Monastery*, ch. XIII.
[2] By Raphael.

have trusted the traditions of them now to the overseer's factory chimney, to the squire's threshing machine, to the Board's school, industrial and other. For all these you have one watchword,—"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die[1]": the exact contradiction to St Bernard's—"Let us watch and pray, for to-morrow we live."

It is not mine to tell you which of these is true; but there is one word that is true for the feeblest of us, and for all it should be enough. "Let us labour joyfully while we have the light. The night cometh;—but thou knowest not what shall be on the morrow[2]."

THE FAMILY OF VERONESE

Modern Painters (5). Vol. VII, pp. 290–292.

[The picture at Dresden, of Veronese's[3] family, painted by himself.]

He wishes to represent them as happy and honoured. The best happiness and highest honour he can imagine for them is that they should be presented to the Madonna, to whom, therefore, they are being brought by the three virtues—Faith, Hope, and Charity.

The Virgin stands in a recess behind two marble shafts, such as may be seen in any house belonging to an old family in Venice. She places the boy Christ on the edge of a balustrade before her. At her side are St John the Baptist, and St Jerome[4]. This group occupies the left side of the picture. The pillars, seen sideways, divide it from the group

1 1 Corinthians xv. 32.

2 John ix. 4; James iv. 14.

3 Paul Veronese (1532–1588), a Venetian painter.

4 St Jerome (circa 240–420). A favourite subject with mediaeval painters; theological writer and translator of the Bible into Latin. He lived mainly at Bethlehem.

formed by the Virtues, with the wife and children of Veronese. He himself stands a little behind, his hands clasped in prayer.

His wife kneels full in front, a strong Venetian woman, well advanced in years. She has brought up her children in fear of God, and is not afraid to meet the Virgin's eyes. She gazes steadfastly on them; her proud head and gentle, self-possessed face are relieved in one broad mass of shadow against a space of light, formed by the white robes of Faith, who stands beside her—guardian, and companion. Perhaps a somewhat disappointing Faith at the first sight, for her face is not in any special way exalted or refined. Veronese knew that Faith had to companion simple and slow-hearted people, perhaps oftener than able or refined people—does not therefore insist on her being severely intellectual, or looking as if she were always in the best company. So she is only distinguished by her pure white (not bright white) dress, her delicate hand, her golden hair drifted in light ripples across her breast, from which the white robes fall nearly in the shape of a shield—the shield of Faith. A little behind her stands Hope; she also at first, not to most people a recognizable Hope. We usually paint Hope as young, and joyous. Veronese knows better. The young hope is vain hope—passing away in rain of tears; but the Hope of Veronese is aged, assured, remaining when all else has been taken away. "For tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope"; and *that* hope maketh not ashamed[1].

She has a black veil on her head.

Then again, in the front, is Charity, red-robed; stout in the arms,—a servant of all work, she; but small-headed, not being specially given to thinking; soft-eyed, her hair braided brightly; her lips rich red, sweet-blossoming. She has got some work to do even now, for a nephew of

[1] Romans v. 3–5.

Veronese's is doubtful about coming forward, and looks very humbly and penitently towards the Virgin—his life perhaps not having been quite so exemplary as might at present be wished. Faith reaches her small white hand lightly back to him, lays the tips of her fingers on his; but Charity takes firm hold of him by the wrist from behind, and will push him on presently, if he still hangs back.

In front of the mother kneel her two eldest children, a girl of about sixteen, and a boy a year or two younger. They are both rapt in adoration—the boy's being the deepest. Nearer us, at their left side, is a younger boy, about nine years old—a black-eyed fellow, full of life—and evidently his father's darling (for Veronese has put him full in light in the front; and given him a beautiful white silken jacket, barred with black, that nobody may ever miss seeing him to the end of time). He is a little shy about being presented to the Madonna, and for the present has got behind the pillar, blushing, but opening his black eyes wide; he is just summoning courage to peep round and see if she looks kind. A still younger child, about six years old, is really frightened, and has run back to his mother, catching hold of her dress at the waist. She throws her right arm round him and over him, with exquisite instinctive action, not moving her eyes from the Madonna's face. Last of all the youngest child, perhaps about three years old, is neither frightened nor interested, but finds the ceremony tedious, and is trying to coax the dog to play with him; but the dog, which is one of the little curly, short-nosed, fringy-pawed things, which all Venetian ladies petted, will not now be coaxed. For the dog is the last link in the chain of lowering feeling, and takes his doggish views of the matter. He cannot understand, first, how the Madonna got into the house; nor, secondly, why she is allowed to stay, disturbing the family, and taking all their attention from his dogship. And he is walking away, much offended.

ALBERT DÜRER

Modern Painters (5). Vol. VII, pp. 310–314.

In the sight of Dürer[1], things were for the most part as they ought to be. Men did their work in his city and in the fields round it. The clergy were sincere. Great social questions unagitated; great social evils either non-existent, or seemingly a part of the nature of things, and inevitable. His answer was that of patient hope; and twofold, consisting of one design in praise of Fortitude, and another in praise of Labour. The Fortitude, commonly known as the "Knight and Death[2]," represents a knight riding through a dark valley overhung by leafless trees, and with a great castle on a hill beyond. Beside him, but a little in advance, rides Death on a pale horse. Death is gray-haired and crowned;—serpents wreathed about his crown; (the sting of Death involved in the kingly power). He holds up the hour-glass, and looks earnestly into the knight's face. Behind him follows Sin; but Sin powerless; he has been conquered and passed by, but follows yet, watching if any way of assault remains. On his forehead are two horns—I think of sea-shell—to indicate his insatiableness and instability. He has also the twisted horns of the ram, for stubbornness, the ears of an ass, the snout of a swine, the hoofs of a goat. Torn wings hang useless from his shoulders, and he carries a spear with two hooks, for catching as well as wounding. The knight does not heed him, nor even Death, though he is conscious of the presence of the last.

He rides quietly, his bridle firm in his hand, and his lips set close in a slight sorrowful smile, for he hears what Death is saying; and hears it as the word of a messenger

[1] Albert Dürer (1471–1528), of Nuremberg, painter and engraver.
[2] 1513 was the date of this engraving.

who brings pleasant tidings, thinking to bring evil ones. A little branch of delicate heath is twisted round his helmet. His horse trots proudly and straight; its head high, and with a cluster of oak on the brow where on the fiend's brow is the sea-shell horn. But the horse of Death stoops its head; and its rein catches the little bell which hangs from the knight's horse-bridle, making it toll as a passing-bell.

Dürer's second answer is the plate of "Melancholia[1]," which is the history of the sorrowful toil of the earth, as the "Knight and Death" is of its sorrowful patience under temptation....

Dürer declares the sad but unsullied conquest over Death the tempter; and the sad but enduring conquest over Death the destroyer.

Though the general intent of the Melancholia is clear, and to be felt at a glance, I am in some doubt respecting its special symbolism. I do not know how far Dürer intended to show that labour, in many of its most earnest forms, is closely connected with the morbid sadness or "dark anger," of the northern nations. Truly some of the best work ever done for man, has been in that dark anger; but I have not yet been able to determine for myself how far this is necessary, or how far great work may also be done with cheerfulness. If I knew what the truth was, I should be able to interpret Dürer better; meantime the design seems to me his answer to the complaint, "Yet is his strength labour and sorrow[2]."

"Yes," he replies, "but labour and sorrow are his strength."

The labour indicated is in the daily work of men. Not the inspired or gifted labour of the few (it is labour connected with the sciences, not with the arts), shown in its four chief functions: thoughtful, faithful, calculating, and executing.

[1] 1514. [2] Psalm xc. 10.

Thoughtful, first; all true power coming of that resolved, resistless calm of melancholy thought. This is the first and last message of the whole design. Faithful, the right arm of the spirit resting on the book. Calculating (chiefly in the sense of self-command), the compasses in her right hand. Executive—roughest instruments of labour at her feet: a crucible, and geometrical solids, indicating her work in the sciences. Over her head the hour-glass and the bell, for their continual words, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do[1]." Beside her, childish labour (lesson-learning?) sitting on an old millstone, with a tablet on its knees. I do not know what instrument it has in its hand. At her knees a wolf-hound asleep. In the distance a comet (the disorder and threatening of the universe) setting, the rainbow dominant over it. Her strong body is close girded for work; at her waist hang the keys of wealth; but the coin is cast aside contemptuously under her feet. She has eagle's wings, and is crowned with fair leafage of spring.

Yes, Albert of Nuremberg, it was a noble answer, yet an imperfect one. This is indeed the labour which is crowned with laurel and has the wings of the eagle.

TURNER'S YOUTH

Modern Painters (5). Vol. VII, pp. 383–386.

And at last fortune wills that the lad's true life shall begin; and one summer's evening, after various wonderful stage-coach experiences on the north road, which gave him a love of stage-coaches ever after, he finds himself sitting alone among the Yorkshire hills[2]. For the first time, the

[1] Ecclesiastes ix. 10.

[2] In 1797 Turner first visited Yorkshire.

silence of Nature round him, her freedom sealed to him, her glory opened to him. Peace at last; no roll of cart-wheel, nor mutter of sullen voices in the back shop; but curlew-cry in space of heaven, and welling of bell-toned streamlet by its shadowy rock. Freedom at last. Dead-wall, dark railing, fenced field, gated garden, all passed away like the dream of a prisoner; and behold, far as foot or eye can race or range, the moor, and cloud. Loveliness at last. It is here then, among these deserted vales! Not among men. Those pale, poverty-struck, or cruel faces;—that multitudinous, marred humanity—are not the only things that God has made. Here is something He has made which no one has marred. Pride of purple rocks, and river pools of blue, and tender wilderness of glittering trees, and misty lights of evening on immeasurable hills.

Beauty, and freedom, and peace; and yet another teacher, graver than these. Sound preaching at last here, in Kirkstall[1] crypt, concerning fate and life. Here, where the dark pool reflects the chancel pillars, and the cattle lie in unhindered rest, the soft sunshine on their dappled bodies, instead of priests' vestments; their white furry hair ruffled a little, fitfully, by the evening wind deep-scented from the meadow thyme.

Consider deeply the import to him of this, his first sight of ruin, and compare it with the effect of the architecture that was around Giorgione. There were indeed aged buildings, at Venice, in his time, but none in decay. All ruin was removed, and its place filled as quickly as in our London; but filled always by architecture loftier and more wonderful than that whose place it took, the boy himself happy to work upon the walls of it so that the idea of the passing away of the strength of men and beauty of their works never could occur to him sternly. Brighter and brighter the cities of Italy had been rising and broadening

[1] An abbey near Leeds.

on hill and plain, for three hundred years. He saw only strength and immortality, could not but paint both; conceived the form of man as deathless, calm with power, and fiery with life.

Turner saw the exact reverse of this. In the present work of men, meanness, aimlessness, unsightliness: thin-walled, lath-divided, narrow-garreted houses of clay; booths of a darksome Vanity Fair, busily base.

But on Whitby Hill, and by Bolton Brook, remained traces of other handiwork. Men who could build had been there; and who also had wrought, not merely for their own days. But to what purpose? Strong faith, and steady hands, and patient souls—can this, then, be all you have left? this the sum of your doing on the earth;—a nest whence the night-owl may whimper to the brook, and a ribbed skeleton of consumed arches, looming above the bleak banks of mist, from its cliff to the sea?

As the strength of men to Giorgione[1], to Turner their weakness and vileness, were alone visible. They themselves, unworthy or ephemeral; their work, despicable, or decayed. In the Venetian's eyes, all beauty depended on man's presence and pride; in Turner's, on the solitude he had left, and the humiliation he had suffered.

And thus the fate and issue of all his work were determined at once. He must be a painter of the strength of nature, there was no beauty elsewhere than in that; he must paint also the labour and sorrow and passing away of men: this was the great human truth visible to him.

[1] Giorgione (1478–1511), a Venetian painter.

FREDERICK WALKER

Academy Notes. Vol. XIV, pp. 339–345.

DEAR MR MARKS[1],—You ask me to say what I feel of Frederick Walker's work, now seen in some collective mass, as far as anything can be seen in black-veiled London. You have long known my admiration of his genius, my delight in many passages of his art. These, while he lived, were all I cared to express. If you will have me speak of him now, I must speak the whole truth of what I feel—namely, that every soul in London interested in art ought to go to see that Exhibition, and, amid all the beauty and the sadness of it, very diligently to try and examine themselves as to the share they have had, in their own busy modern life, in arresting the power of this man at the point where it stayed. Very chief share they have had, assuredly. But he himself, in the liberal and radical temper of modern youth, has had his own part in casting down his strength, following wantonly or obstinately his own fancies wherever they led him.

For instance, it being Nature's opinion that sky should usually be blue, and it being Mr Walker's opinion that it should be the colour of buff plaster, he resolutely makes it so, for his own isolated satisfaction, partly in affectation also, buff skies being considered by the public more sentimental than blue ones. Again, the laws of all good painting having been long ago determined by absolute masters, whose work cannot be bettered nor departed from—Titian[2] having

[1] Frederick Walker, A.R.A. (1840–1875), an artist of great originality and genius, who died prematurely. This letter was addressed, at his own request, to Mr Stacy Marks, R.A., in order to record Ruskin's impression of the exhibition of Walker's works in 1876. It appeared originally in *The Times*.

[2] Titian (1477–1576), Venetian painter mainly of portraits and allegorical subjects.

determined for ever what oil-painting is, Angelico[1] what tempera-painting is, Perugino, what fresco-painting is, two hundred years of noble miniature-painting what minutest work on ivory is, and, in modern times, a score of entirely skilful and disciplined draughtsmen what pure water-colour and pure body-colour painting on paper are...; here is Mr Walker refusing to learn anything from any of those schools or masters, but inventing a semi-miniature, quarter-fresco, quarter-wash manner of his own—exquisitely clever, and reaching, under such clever management, delightfullest results here and there, but which betrays his genius into perpetual experiment instead of achievement, and his life into woful vacillation between the good, old, quiet room of the Water-Colour Society, and your labyrinthine magnificence at Burlington House.

Lastly, and in worst error, the libraries of England being full of true and noble books—her annals of true and noble history, and her traditions of beautiful and noble—in these scientific times I must say, I suppose, "mythology"—not religion—from all these elements of mental education and subjects of serviceable art, he turns recklessly away to enrich the advertisements of the circulating library, to sketch whatever pleases his fancy, barefooted, or in dainty boots, of modern beggary and fashion, and enforce, with laboriously symbolical pathos, his adherence to Justice Shallow's sublime theology that "all shall die[2]."

That theology has indeed been preached by stronger men, again and again, from Horace's days to our own, but never to so little purpose. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die[3]," said wisely in his way the Latin farmer, who ate his beans and bacon in comfort, had his suppers of the gods on the fair earth, with his servants jesting round the table,

[1] Fra Angelico (1387–1455), painter of devotional subjects in fresco and oils.

[2] 2 *Henry* IV, Act iii, Sc. 2.

[3] 1 Corinthians xv. 32.

and left eternal monuments of earthly wisdom and of cricket-song. "Let us labour and be just, for to-morrow we die, and after death the Judgment," said Holbein[1] and Dürer, and left eternal monuments of upright human toil and honourable gloom of godly fear. "Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, for to-morrow we die, and shall be with God," said Angelico and Giotto[2], and left eternal monuments of divinely-blazoned heraldry of Heaven. "Let us smoke pipes, make money, read bad novels, walk in bad air, and say sentimentally how sick we are in the afternoon, for to-morrow we die, and shall be made ourselves clay pipes," says the modern world, and drags this poor bright painter down into the abyss with it, vainly clutching at a handful or two of scent and flowers in the May gardens.

Under which sorrowful terms, being told also by your grand Academicians that he should paint the nude, and, accordingly, wasting a year or two of his life in trying to paint schoolboys' backs and legs without their shirts or breeches, and with such other magazine material as he can pick up of sick gipsies, faded gentlewomen, pretty girls disguised as paupers, and the red-roofed or grey remnants of old English villages and manor-houses, last wrecks of the country's peace and honour, remaining yet visible among the black ravages of its ruin, he supplies the demands of his temporary public, scarcely patient, even now that he has gone, to pause beside his delicate tulips or under his sharp-leaved willows, and repent for the passing tints and fallen petals of the life that might have been so precious, and, perhaps, in better days, prolonged.

That is the main moral of the Exhibition. Of the beauty of the drawings, accepting them for what they aim at being, there is little need that I should add anything to what has

[1] German portrait-painter (1497–1543), Court painter to Henry VIII and died in London.

[2] Giotto (1276–1336), Florentine fresco-painter.

been already said rightly by the chief organs of the London Press. Nothing can go beyond them in subtlety of exhibited touch (to be distinguished, however, observe always, from the serene completion of master's work, disdaining the applause to be gained by its manifestation); their harmonies of amber-colour and purple are full of exquisite beauty in their chosen key; their composition always graceful, often admirable, and the sympathy they express with all conditions of human life most kind and true; not without power of rendering character which would have been more recognized in an inferior artist, because it would have been less restrained by the love of beauty.

I might, perhaps, in my days of youth and good fortune, have written what the public would have called "eloquent passages" on the subjects of the Almshouse[1] and the Old Gate; being now myself old and decrepit, (besides being much bothered with beggars, and in perpetual feud with parish officers,) and having seen every building I cared for in the world ruined, I pass these two pictures somewhat hastily by, and try to enjoy myself a little in the cottage gardens. Only one of them, however, has right sunshine in it, and that is a sort of walled paddock where I begin directly to feel uncomfortable about the lamb, lest, perchance, some front shop in the cottages belong to a butcher. If only it and I could get away to a bit of thymy hillside, we should be so much happier, leaving the luminous—perhaps too ideally luminous—child to adorn the pathetic paddock. I am too shy to speak to either of those two beautiful ladies among the lilies, and take refuge among the shy children before the "Chaplain's Daughter"—delightfullest, it seems to me, of the minor designs, and a piece of most true and wise satire. The sketches of the "Daughter

[1] A picture of the Almshouse at Bray, entitled "The Harbour of Refuge."

of Heth" go far to tempt me to read the novel[1]; and, ashamed of this weakness, I retreat resolutely to the side of the exemplary young girl knitting in the "Old Farm Garden," and would instantly pick up her ball of worsted for her, but that I wouldn't for the world disappoint the cat. No drawing in the room is more delicately completed than this unpretending subject, and the flower-painting in it, for instantaneous grace of creative touch, cannot be rivalled; it is worth all the Dutch flower-pieces in the world.

Much instructed, and more humiliated, by passage after passage of its rapidly-grouped colour, I get finally away into the comfortable corner beside the salmon-fishers and the mushrooms; and the last-named drawing, despise me who may, keeps me till I've no more time to stay, for it entirely beats my dear old William Hunt[2] in the simplicity of its execution, and rivals him in the subtlest truth.

I say nothing of the "Fishmonger's Stalls" though there are qualities of the same kind in these also, for they somewhat provoke me by their waste of time—the labour spent on one of them would have painted twenty instructive studies of fish of their real size. And it is well for artists in general to observe that when they do condescend to paint still life carefully—whether fruit, fungi or fish—it must at least be of the real size. The portrait of a man or woman is only justifiably made small that it may be portable, but nobody wants to carry about the miniature of a cod; and if the reader will waste five minutes of his season in London in the National Gallery, he may see in the hand of Perugino's Tobias a fish worth all these on the boards together.

... It is all very well for a young artist to show how much work he can put into an inch, but very painful for an old gentleman of fifty-seven to have to make out all the groups through a magnifying glass. I could say something malicious,

[1] By William Black, published 1871.

[2] Water-colour painter of still life (1790–1864).

...in consequence of the effect of this exertion on my temper, but will not, and leave with unqualified praise the remainder of the lesser drawings to the attention which each will variously reward.

Nor, in what I have already, it may be thought, too bluntly said, ought the friends of the noble artist to feel that I am unkind. It is because I know his real power more deeply than any of the admirers who give him indiscriminate applause, that I think it right distinctly to mark the causes which prevented his reaching heights they did not conceive, and ended by placing one more tablet in the street of tombs, which the passionate folly and uninstructed confusion of modern English society prolong into dark perspective above the graves of its youth.

I am, dear Marks, always very faithfully yours,

J. Ruskin.

THREE ARCHITECTS

Val d'Arno. Vol. xxiii, pp. 213–218.

To-day, however, we are to examine the character of the men who belonged specially to the Mathematic as an antagonist, or at least a distinct, body of artists, unsympathetic with the earlier visionary masters, and by their influence bringing about the victory, afterwards total, of scientific methods of art.

The Mathematic school begins with Niccola Pisano[1]; culminates in Michael Angelo; its central captain is Brunelleschi[2].

All three men of gigantic power, and of apparently universal faculty; all three sculptors and architects. Michael

[1] Niccola Pisano (1206–1278), sculptor and architect.

[2] Brunelleschi, Filippo (1377–1444), Florentine sculptor and architect. He designed and built the dome of Florence cathedral.

Angelo[1], a painter also; all three recognized in their time as absolute masters and lawful authorities—men not merely to be admired, but obeyed.

And so recognized, observe, just because, though apparently gifted with all faculty, they were wanting, at least weak, in one, the most precious—imagination; for that is wholly aesthetic. And it is just that which is offensive to a large number of observers, who cannot understand it. It was his imagination which prevented Botticelli[2] from forming a school in Italy; his imagination which prevented Turner from forming a school in England. Had you left him his powers of execution, his love of truth, and given him only as much imagination as Sir Augustus Callcott[3], he would have formed a school of landscape instantly. All these three men, then, had a special power in Italy. Niccola Pisano taught her physical truth and trustworthiness in all things; Brunelleschi the dignity of abstract mathematical law; Michael Angelo the majesty of the human frame. To Niccola you owe the veracity, to Brunelleschi the harmony, and to Michael Angelo the humanity, of mathematic art.

To Brunelleschi, I say, you owe its harmony, he being a man of entirely harmonious, exalted, and refined nature, no less intense than scrupulous, no less strong than patient, and no less daring than subtle. He is the discerner of all that has been recovered, and the founder of all that has been done, in classical architecture justly and honourably so called. Michael Angelo, San Micheli[4], Sansovino[5],

1 Michael Angelo (1474–1563), painter, sculptor and architect. He was appointed architect of St Peter's in 1542.

2 Botticelli, Sandro (1447–1515), Florentine painter. His best-known pictures are the "Birth of Venus" and the "Primavera."

3 Sir Augustus Callcott (1779–1844), landscape-painter.

4 San Micheli (1484–1559), one of the ablest architects of his time. Also a distinguished military architect.

5 Sansovino, Jacopo (1477–1570), sculptor and architect at Florence and Venice.

Palladio[1], Inigo Jones[2], and Wren[3] are all his scholars; to him you, in reality, owe whatever is good and pure, whatever is delicate and learned, in the architecture of modern Europe. But above all things you especially owe to him —what perhaps some of my audience may be more grateful to him for than I am—the three great domes of Florence, Rome, and London.

I should much like to test the feeling of my audience on this matter. Of course, if I were to ask everybody who had seen with admiration the dome of Florence to hold up their hands, everybody would lift hand who had been there. But what I should like to know is whether, on slow self-examination, they look forward to another sight of the dome of Florence, as they do to seeing, after a year or two's interval, the spire of Strassburg again, or the towers of the west front of Rouen.

And for the general public—would not the glimpses of Florence be just as brilliant if the dome were not there —provided only the mosaic shops were? I don't mean that one would not miss the dominant mass of it in distant views of the city, just as one would miss St Paul's from London; but only that the enjoyment of one's Florentine or London life does not depend on those objects, however admittedly sublime; and I think that when amateurs express themselves with enthusiasm about that Florentine cupola, they are in reality only patting the dome of Florence to appease their own consciences, like Sydney Smith's[4] little girl caressing

[1] Palladio, Andrea (1518–1580), architect. He lived at Vicenza and originated the modern school of classical Italian architecture, called Palladian.

[2] Jones, Inigo (1572–1653), architect: introduced the palladian style into England.

[3] Wren, Sir Christopher (1632–1723), architect. Built St Paul's Cathedral, the Royal Exchange, and many other public buildings and churches.

[4] Smith, Sydney (1771–1845), a famous wit, critic, politician and parish priest. Canon of St Paul's from 1831.

the tortoise, when her father told her she might as well pat the dome of St Paul's to please the Dean and Chapter.

Observe, in saying so much as this, I carefully hold apart all influence of association or historical sentiment. If you introduce that element of emotion, it does not much matter, supposing the historical or pathetic interest equal, whether your approach to any great city or ruin of city is announced by the outline on the horizon of a tower, a dome, or a pyramid. But counting only the enduring pleasure we take in the sight of a beautiful thing, I believe that in a healthy and naturally aesthetic mind one does heartily enjoy seeing Coventry spires again as one drives down the hill into the town, or the three gables of Peterborough over the flats, or the long-ridged back of the roof of Amiens, with its sharp arrow of a belfry, but that in driving about Florence it is a matter of extreme indifference whether at the end of a street we see the dome or not.

For my own part I am free to confess that I have not the slightest idea what Michael Angelo meant when he said, "Like thee I will not build one, better than thee I cannot." I don't even know what he is supposed to have meant—whether to have been thinking only of the skill of construction, or perceiving a grace of proportion which he could only spoil by altering. So far as he meant the first, no unprofessional person can give any admiration on the same grounds. The merit of structure in a dome depends on relations of weight in the shell and buttresses of it—which to admire, you must first know a great deal of high mathematics—and then the thickness and material of the walls, and shell all the way up. No general spectator can have the slightest idea whether a dome is ill built or well in such particulars.

For the general grace of its outline a dome is merely to be considered as a cup turned upside down; and as on any shelf of the Etruscan Room of the British Museum, or of

the Florentine Uffizi, I can see twenty cups in a row, every one of them of a different outline, and every one of them equally pretty, I confess myself utterly unable to understand why Michael Angelo should have felt himself unequal to drawing another cup that should be just as agreeable in outline as that of his Florentine friend, and stand just as steadily bottom upwards.

And, in fact, respecting all these traditional remarks of Michael Angelo, you will do well to receive them without any oppressive sense of their profundity. You never can find out, in the first place, to whom they were said; and if you could, I think it probable you would consider them as spoken more with a view to the impression upon that not always very sagacious hearer, than as the final results of his own reflection. For instance, in different parts of your admirable Murray's Guide you will find it related, as the occasion serves, that Michael Angelo, after looking a long while at Donatello's[1] St George, said to it, "March"; that after looking a long while at Ghiberti's[2] St Mark, he said to it, "Speak"; and after looking a long while at the bronze horse of Marcus Aurelius[3], he said to it, "Trot."

These observations may in each case have been thought by the bystanders to represent the most refined and concentrated form of artistic criticism; but certainly one or two such cannot but have been made by every artist in the course of his critical life, and their record is only of importance to you as at least proving that the impression generally received of Michael Angelo's own theory of

[1] Donatello (1383–1466), Florentine sculptor and bronze-worker. The statue of St George is at the Church of San Michele in Florence.

[2] Ghiberti, Lorenzo (1378–1455), sculptor and worker in bronze. He designed and cast the bronze gates of the Baptistery at Florence, and various statues.

[3] On the Capitol at Rome. Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (121 A.D.–180), Roman Emperor and Stoic philosopher, author of the *Meditations*.

sculpture by his contemporaries was that he considered it his first object to make his figures look living.

I think that you may in like manner receive his praise of the dome of Florence as indicating primarily his sense of its safety and economical stability, qualities which it had, as it proved afterwards, in a degree inimitable by him[1]. And you will find in the records of the thought given to it by its builder the same idea prevalent above others. It is not the beauty of the dome, but its unexampled size, of which Brunelleschi intends Florence to be proud; and his own skill is to be shown in the scientific and mechanical functions of designing a safe dome so big, and then of building it with safety to the workman. And herein you find the first clear indication of the new feeling characteristic of the mechanic and mathematic age, that there is a merit deserving primary consideration in mere and simple magnitude, and mere and simple overcoming of physical difficulty. Some merit there assuredly is; and, in the chapter on Power in my *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, I have allowed all that may be reasonably allowed of the influence of bulk, whether in breadth or elevation. But the first condition of impressions to be produced by magnitude is that such magnitude should be measurable by the eye, and there is an experiment to be made in this very Cathedral of Florence, which may convince us of the difficulty of making it so.

[1] In 1740, the cupola of St Peter's adapted by Michael Angelo from Brunelleschi's designs had to be repaired.

RESTORATION[1]

Seven Lamps. Vol. VIII, pp. 242–247.

NEITHER by the public, nor by those who have the care of public monuments, is the true meaning of the word *restoration* understood. It means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered: a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed. Do not let us deceive ourselves in this important matter; it is *impossible*, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture. That which I have above insisted upon as the life of the whole, that spirit which is given only by the hand and eye of the workman, can never be recalled. Another spirit may be given by another time, and it is then a new building; but the spirit of the dead workman cannot be summoned up, and commanded to direct other hands, and other thoughts. And as for direct and simple copying, it is palpably impossible. What copying can there be of surfaces that have been worn half an inch down? The whole finish of the work was in the half inch that is gone; if you attempt to restore that finish, you do it conjecturally; if you copy what is left, granting fidelity to be possible, (and what care or watchfulness, or cost can secure it,) how is the new work better than the old? There was yet in the old *some* life, some mysterious suggestion of what it had been, and of what it had lost; some sweetness in the gentle lines which rain and sun had wrought. There can be none in the brute hardness of the new carving....

[1] Ruskin wrote that this passage was the best in the book—"and the vainest."

Do not let us talk then of restoration. The thing is a Lie from beginning to end. You may make a model of a building as you may of a corpse, and your model may have the shell of the old walls within it as your cast might have the skeleton, with what advantage I neither see nor care: but the old building is destroyed, and that more totally and mercilessly than if it had sunk into a heap of dust, or melted into a mass of clay: more has been gleaned out of desolated Nineveh than ever will be out of re-built Milan. But, it is said, there may come a necessity for restoration! Granted. Look the necessity full in the face, and understand it on its own terms. It is a necessity for destruction. Accept it as such, pull the building down, throw its stones into neglected corners, make ballast of them, or mortar, if you will; but do it honestly, and do not set up a Lie in their place. And look that necessity in the face before it comes, and you may prevent it. The principle of modern times, (a principle which, I believe, at least in France, to be *systematically acted on by the masons*, in order to find themselves work, as the abbey of St Ouen was pulled down by the magistrates of the town by way of giving work to some vagrants,)[1] is to neglect buildings first, and restore them afterwards. Take proper care of your monuments, and you will not need to restore them. A few sheets of lead put in time upon a roof, a few dead leaves and sticks swept in time out of a water-course, will save both roof and walls from ruin. Watch an old building with an anxious care; guard it as best you may, and at *any* cost, from every influence of dilapidation. Count its stones as you would jewels of a crown; set watches about it as if at the gates of a besieged city; bind it together with iron where it loosens; stay it with timber where it declines; do not care about the

[1] In 1846 the west front of the church of St Ouen, at Rouen, was pulled down and rebuilt by Viollet-le-Duc, who did not even reproduce the original design.

unsightliness of the aid: better a crutch than a lost limb; and do this tenderly, and reverently, and continually, and many a generation will still be born and pass away beneath its shadow. Its evil day must come at last; but let it come declaredly and openly, and let no dishonouring and false substitute deprive it of the funeral offices of memory.

Of more wanton or ignorant ravage it is vain to speak; my words will not reach those who commit them, and yet, be it heard or not, I must not leave the truth unstated, that it is again no question of expediency or feeling whether we shall preserve the buildings of past times or not. *We have no right whatever to touch them.* They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us. The dead have still their right in them: that which they laboured for, the praise of achievement or the expression of religious feeling, or whatsoever else it might be which in those buildings they intended to be permanent, we have no right to obliterate. What we have ourselves built, we are at liberty to throw down; but what other men gave their strength and wealth and life to accomplish, their right over does not pass away with their death; still less is the right to the use of what they have left vested in us only. It belongs to all their successors. It may hereafter be a subject of sorrow, or a cause of injury, to millions, that we have consulted our present convenience by casting down such buildings as we choose to dispense with. That sorrow, that loss, we have no right to inflict. Did the cathedral of Avranches belong to the mob who destroyed it, any more than it did to us, who walk in sorrow to and fro over its foundation[1]? Neither does any building whatever belong

[1] Avranches Cathedral, in Normandy, having become ruinous, was pulled down in 1799. Henry II of England did penance there before the Papal Legates in 1172 for the murder of Becket.

to those mobs who do violence to it. For a mob it is, and must be always; it matters not whether enraged, or in deliberate folly; whether countless, or sitting in committees; the people who destroy anything causelessly are a mob, and Architecture is always destroyed causelessly. A fair building is necessarily worth the ground it stands upon, and will be so until Central Africa and America shall have become as populous as Middlesex: nor is any cause whatever valid as a ground for its destruction. If ever valid, certainly not now, when the place both of the past and future is too much usurped in our minds by the restless and discontented present. The very quietness of nature is gradually withdrawn from us; thousands who once in their necessarily prolonged travel were subjected to an influence, from the silent sky and slumbering fields, more effectual than known or confessed, now bear with them even there the ceaseless fever of their life; and along the iron veins that traverse the frame of our country, beat and flow the fiery pulses of its exertion, hotter and faster every hour. All vitality is concentrated through those throbbing arteries into the central cities; the country is passed over like a green sea by narrow bridges, and we are thrown back in continually closer crowds upon the city gates. The only influence which can in any wise *there* take the place of that of the woods and fields, is the power of ancient Architecture. Do not part with it for the sake of the formal square, or of the fenced and planted walk, nor of the goodly street nor opened quay. The pride of a city is not in these. Leave them to the crowd; but remember that there will surely be some within the circuit of the disquieted walls who would ask for some other spots than these wherein to walk; for some other forms to meet their sight familiarly: like him[1] who sat so often where the sun struck from the west,

[1] Dante (1265–1321) lived at Florence till exiled in 1302.

to watch the lines of the dome of Florence drawn on the deep sky, or like those, his Hosts[1], who could bear daily to behold, from their palace chambers, the places where their fathers lay at rest, at the meeting of the dark streets of Verona[2].

A GENTLEMAN

Modern Painters (5). Vol. VII, pp. 345–349, 360–362.

A GENTLEMAN'S first characteristic is that fineness of structure in the body, which renders it capable of the most delicate sensation; and of structure in the mind which renders it capable of the most delicate sympathies—one may say, simply, "fineness of nature." This is, of course, compatible with heroic bodily strength and mental firmness; in fact, heroic strength is not conceivable without such delicacy. Elephantine strength may drive its way through a forest and feel no touch of the boughs; but the white skin of Homer's Atrides[3] would have felt a bent rose-leaf, yet subdue its feeling in glow of battle, and behave itself like iron. I do not mean to call an elephant a vulgar animal; but if you think about him carefully, you will find that his non-vulgarity consists in such gentleness as is possible to elephantine nature; not in his insensitive hide, nor in his clumsy foot; but in the way he will lift his foot if a child lies in his way; and in his sensitive trunk, and still more sensitive mind, and capability of pique on points of honour.

[1] The Della Scala family. Dante spent his exile at Verona in the palace of the Prince Can Grande della Scala.

[2] For the first of these allusions to Dante, see Rogers' *Italy* ("Florence") and Turner's vignette; the second allusion is to Dante's exile, at the court of Can Grande, and to the tombs of the Scaligers.

[3] Menelaus (*Iliad*, IV. 147).

And, though rightness of moral conduct is ultimately the great purifier of race, the sign of nobleness is not in this rightness of moral conduct, but in sensitiveness. When the make of the creature is fine, its temptations are strong, as well as its perceptions; it is liable to all kinds of impressions from without in their most violent form; liable therefore to be abused and hurt by all kinds of rough things which would do a coarser creature little harm, and thus to fall into frightful wrong if its fate will have it so. Thus David, coming of gentlest as well as royalest race, of Ruth as well as of Judah, is sensitiveness through all flesh and spirit; not that his compassion will restrain him from murder when his terror urges him to it; nay, he is driven to the murder all the more by his sensitiveness to the shame which otherwise threatens him. But when his own story is told under a disguise, though only a lamb is now concerned, his passion about it leaves him no time for thought. "The man shall die"—note the reason—"because he had no pity[1]." He is so eager and indignant that it never occurs to him as strange that Nathan hides the name. This is true gentleman. A vulgar man would assuredly have been cautious, and asked who it was.

Hence it will follow that one of the probable signs of high-breeding in men generally, will be their kindness and mercifulness; these always indicating more or less fineness of make in the mind; and miserliness and cruelty the contrary; hence that of Isaiah: "The vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful[2]." But a thousand things may prevent this kindness from displaying or continuing itself; the mind of the man may be warped so as to bear mainly on his own interests, and then all his sensibilities will take the form of pride, or fastidiousness, or revengefulness; and other wicked, but not ungentlemanly tempers; or, farther, they may run into utter

[1] 2 Samuel xii. 5, 6. [2] Isaiah xxxii. 5.

sensuality and covetousness, if he is bent on pleasure, accompanied with quite infinite cruelty when the pride is wounded or the passions are thwarted....

A truer sign of breeding than mere kindness is therefore sympathy;—a vulgar man may often be kind in a hard way, on principle, and because he thinks he ought to be; whereas, a highly-bred man, even when cruel, will be cruel in a softer way, understanding and feeling what he inflicts, and pitying his victim. Only we must carefully remember that the quantity of sympathy a gentleman feels can never be judged of by its outward expression, for another of his chief characteristics is apparent reserve. I say "apparent" reserve; for the sympathy is real, but the reserve not: a perfect gentleman is never reserved, but sweetly and entirely open, so far as it is good for others, or possible, that he should be. In a great many respects it is impossible that he should be open except to men of his own kind. To them, he can open himself, by a word or syllable, or a glance; but to men not of his kind he cannot open himself, though he tried it through an eternity of clear grammatical speech. By the very acuteness of his sympathy he knows how much of himself he can give to anybody; and he gives that much frankly;—would always be glad to give more if he could, but is obliged, nevertheless, in his general intercourse with the world, to be a somewhat silent person; silence is to most people, he finds, less reserve than speech. Whatever he said, a vulgar man would misinterpret: no words that he could use would bear the same sense to the vulgar man that they do to him; if he used any, the vulgar man would go away saying, "He had said so and so, and meant so and so" (something assuredly he never meant): but he keeps silence, and the vulgar man goes away saying, "He didn't know what to make of him." Which is precisely the fact, and the only fact which he is anywise able to announce to the vulgar man concerning himself.

There is yet another quite as efficient cause of the apparent reserve of a gentleman. His sensibility being constant and intelligent, it will be seldom that a feeling touches him, however acutely, but it has touched him in the same way often before, and in some sort is touching him always. It is not that he feels little, but that he feels habitually; a vulgar man having some heart at the bottom of him, if you can by talk or by sight fairly force the pathos of anything down to his heart, will be excited about it and demonstrative; the sensation of pity being strange to him and wonderful. But your gentleman has walked in pity all day long; the tears have never been out of his eyes; you thought the eyes were bright only; but they were wet. You tell him a sorrowful story, and his countenance does not change; the eyes can but be wet still: he does not speak neither, there being, in fact, nothing to be said, only something to be done; some vulgar person, beside you both, goes away saying, "How hard he is!" Next day he hears that the hard person has put good end to the sorrow he said nothing about;—and then he changes his wonder, and exclaims, "How reserved he is!"

Self-command is often thought a characteristic of high-breeding; and to a certain extent it is so, at least it is one of the means of forming and strengthening character; but it is rather a way of imitating a gentleman than a characteristic of him; a true gentleman has no need of self-command; he simply feels rightly on all occasions; and desiring to express only so much of his feeling as it is right to express, does not need to command himself. Hence perfect ease is indeed characteristic of him; but perfect ease is inconsistent with self-restraint. Nevertheless gentlemen, so far as they fail of their own ideal, need to command themselves, and do so; while, on the contrary, to feel unwisely, and to be unable to restrain the expression of the unwise feeling, is vulgarity; and yet even then, the vulgarity, at its root,

is not in the mistimed expression, but in the unseemly feeling; and when we find fault with a vulgar person for "exposing himself," it is not his openness, but clumsiness; and yet more the want of sensibility to his own failure, which we blame; so that still the vulgarity resolves itself into want of sensibility. Also, it is to be noted that great powers of self-restraint may be attained by very vulgar persons when it suits their purposes....

Two years ago, when I was first beginning to work out the subject, and chatting with one of my keenest-minded friends (Mr Brett, the painter of the Val d'Aosta in the Exhibition of 1859), I casually asked him, "What is vulgarity?" merely to see what he would say, not supposing it possible to get a sudden answer. He thought for about a minute, then answered quietly, "It is merely one of the forms of Death." I did not see the meaning of the reply at the time; but on testing it, found that it met every phase of the difficulties connected with the inquiry, and summed the true conclusion. Yet, in order to be complete, it ought to be made a distinctive as well as conclusive definition; showing *what* form of death vulgarity is; for death itself is not vulgar, but only death mingled with life. I cannot, however, construct a short-worded definition which will include all the minor conditions of bodily degeneracy; but the term "deathful selfishness" will embrace all the most fatal and essential forms of mental vulgarity.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF MONEY

Time and Tide. Vol. XVII, pp. 458–461.

FIRST, have you ever observed that all Christ's main teachings, by direct order, by earnest parable, and by His own permanent emotion, regard the use and misuse of *money*? We might have thought, if we had been asked what a divine teacher was most likely to teach, that he would have left inferior persons to give directions about money; and himself spoken only concerning faith and love, and the discipline of the passions, and the guilt of the crimes of soul against soul. But not so. He speaks in general terms of these. But He does not speak parables about them for all men's memory, nor permit Himself fierce indignation against them, in all men's sight. The Pharisees bring Him an adulteress. He writes her forgiveness on the dust of which He had formed her. Another, despised of all for known sin, He recognises as a giver of unknown love. But He acknowledges no love in buyers and sellers in His house. One should have thought there were people in that house twenty times worse than they;—Caiaphas and his like—false priests, false prayer-makers, false leaders of the people—who needed putting to silence, or to flight, with darkest wrath. But the scourge is only against the *traffickers and thieves.* The two most intense of all the parables: the two which lead the rest in love and terror (this of the Prodigal, and of Dives), relate, both of them, to management of riches. The practical order given to the only seeker of advice, of whom it is recorded that Christ "loved him," is briefly about his property. "Sell that thou hast[1]."

[1] Mark x. 21.

And the arbitrament of the day of the Last Judgment is made to rest wholly, neither on belief in God, nor in any spiritual virtue in man, nor on freedom from stress of stormy crime, but on this only, "I was an hungered and ye gave me drink; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye came unto me[1]."

Well, then, the first thing I want you to notice in the parable of the Prodigal Son (and the last thing which people usually *do* notice in it), is—that it is about a Prodigal! He begins by asking for his share of his father's goods; he gets it, carries it off, and wastes it. It is true that he wastes it in riotous living, but you are not asked to notice in what kind of riot: he spends it with harlots—but it is not the harlotry which his elder brother accuses him of mainly, but of having devoured his father's living. Nay, it is not the sensual life which he accuses himself of—or which the manner of his punishment accuses him of. But the *wasteful* life. It is not said that he had become debauched in soul, or diseased in body, by his vice; but that at last he would fain have filled his belly with husks, and could not. It is not said that he was struck with remorse for the consequences of his evil passions, but only that he remembered there was bread enough and to spare, even for the servants, at home.

Now, my friend, do not think I want to extenuate sins of passion (though, in very truth, the sin of Magdalene is a light one compared to that of Judas); but observe, sins of passion, if of *real* passion, are often the errors and back-falls of noble souls; but prodigality is mere and pure selfishness, and essentially the sin of an ignoble or undeveloped creature; and I would rather, ten times rather, hear of a youth that (certain degrees of temptation and conditions of resistance being understood) he had fallen into any sin you chose to name, of all the mortal ones, than that he was in the habit of running bills which he could not pay.

[1] Matthew xxv. 35, 36.

Farther, though I hold that the two crowning and most accursed sins of the society of this present day are the carelessness with which it regards the betrayal of women, and the brutality with which it suffers the neglect of children, both these head and chief crimes, and all others, are rooted first in abuse of the laws, and neglect of the duties concerning wealth. And thus the love of money, with the parallel (and, observe, *mathematically commensurate* looseness in management of it), the "mal tener," followed necessarily by the "mal dare[1]," is, indeed, the root of all evil.

Then, secondly, I want you to note that when the prodigal comes to his senses, he complains of nobody but himself, and speaks of no unworthiness but his own. He says nothing against any of the women who tempted him —nothing against the citizen who left him to feed on husks—nothing of the false friends of whom "no man gave unto him[2]"—above all nothing of the "corruption of human nature," or the corruption of things in general. He says that *he himself* is unworthy, as distinguished from honourable persons, and that *he himself* has sinned, as distinguished from righteous persons. And *that* is the hard lesson to learn, and the beginning of faithful lessons. All right and fruitful humility, and purging of heart, and seeing of God, is in that. It is easy to call yourself the chief of sinners, expecting every sinner round you to decline—or return—the compliment; but learn to measure the real degrees of your own relative baseness, and to be ashamed, not in heaven's sight, but in man's sight; and redemption is indeed begun. Observe the phrase, I have sinned "*against* heaven," against the great law of that, and *before* thee, visibly degraded before my human sire and guide, unworthy any more of being esteemed of his blood, and

[1] Wrongful possession and wrongful spending.

[2] Luke xv. 16, 18.

desirous only of taking the place I deserve among his servants.

Now, I do not doubt but that I shall set many a reader's teeth on edge by what he will think my carnal and material rendering of this "beautiful" parable. But I am just as ready to spiritualise it as he is, provided I am sure first that we understand it. If we want to understand the parable of the sower[1], we must first think of it as of literal husbandry; if we want to understand the parable of the prodigal, we must first understand it as of literal prodigality. And the story has also for us a precious lesson in this literal sense of it, namely this, which I have been urging upon you throughout these letters, that all redemption must begin in subjection, and in the recovery of the sense of Fatherhood and authority, as all ruin and desolation begin in the loss of that sense. The lost son began by claiming his rights. He is found when he resigns them. He is lost by flying from his father, when his father's authority was only paternal. He is found by returning to his father, and desiring that his authority may be absolute, as over a hired stranger.

RECREATION

Time and Tide. Vol. XVII, pp. 334–336.

But there are better things even than these, which one may want. Grant that one has good food, clothes, lodging, and breathing, is that all the pay one ought to have for one's work? Wholesome means of existence and nothing more? Enough, perhaps, you think, if everybody could get these. It may be so; I will not, at this moment, dispute it; nevertheless, I will boldly say that you should sometimes want

[1] Matthew xiii. 3.

more than these; and for one of many things more, you should want occasionally to be amused!

You know, the upper classes, most of them, want to be amused all day long. They think

> One moment *un*amused a misery
> Not made for feeble men[1].

Perhaps you have been in the habit of despising them for this; and thinking how much worthier and nobler it was to work all day, and care at night only for food and rest, than to do no useful thing all day, eat unearned food, and spend the evening, as the morning, in "change of follies and relays of joy[2]." No, my good friend, that is one of the fatallest deceptions. It is not a noble thing, in sum and issue of it, not to care to be amused. It is indeed a far higher *moral* state, but is a much lower *creature* state, than that of the upper classes.

Yonder poor horse, calm slave in daily chains at the railroad siding, who drags the detached rear of the train to the front again, and slips aside so deftly as the buffers meet; and, within eighteen inches of death every ten minutes fulfils his changeless duty all day long, content, for eternal reward, with his night's rest, and his champed mouthful of hay;—anything more earnestly moral and beautiful one cannot image—I never see the creature without a kind of worship. And yonder musician, who used the greatest power which (in the art he knew) the Father of spirits ever yet breathed into the clay of this world;—who used it, I say, to follow and fit with perfect sound the words of the "Zauberflöte" and of "Don Giovanni[3]"—foolishest and most monstrous of conceivable human words and subjects of thought—for the future "amusement" of his race! No such spectacle of unconscious (and in that un-

[1] Young's *Night Thoughts*, II. 246.
[2] *Ibid.* II. 250.
[3] Operas by Mozart, whose music Ruskin held to be supreme.

consciousness all the more fearful) moral degradation of the highest faculty to the lowest purpose can be found in history. But Mozart is nevertheless a nobler creature than the horse at the siding; nor would it be the least nearer the purpose of his Maker that he, and all his frivolous audiences should evade the degradation of the profitless piping, only by living, like horses, in daily physical labour for daily bread.

There are three things to which man is born—labour, and sorrow, and joy. Each of these three things has its baseness and its nobleness. There is base labour, and noble labour. There is base sorrow, and noble sorrow. There is base joy, and noble joy. But you must not think to avoid the corruption of these things by doing without the things themselves. Nor can any life be right that has not all three. Labour without joy is base. Labour without sorrow is base. Sorrow without labour is base. Joy without labour is base.

THE MERCHANT'S TRADE

Unto this Last. Vol. XVII, pp. 36–40.

I HAVE already alluded to the difference hitherto existing between regiments of men associated for purposes of violence, and for purposes of manufacture; in that the former appear capable of self-sacrifice—the latter, not; which singular fact is the real reason of the general lowness of estimate in which the profession of commerce is held, as compared with that of arms. Philosophically, it does not, at first sight, appear reasonable (many writers have endeavoured to prove it unreasonable) that a peaceable and rational person, whose trade is buying and selling, should be held in less honour than an unpeaceable and often irrational person, whose

trade is slaying. Nevertheless, the consent of mankind has always, in spite of the philosophers, given precedence to the soldier.

And this is right.

For the soldier's trade, verily and essentially, is not slaying, but being slain. This, without well knowing its own meaning, the world honours it for. A bravo's trade is slaying; but the world has never respected bravos more than merchants: the reason it honours the soldier is, because he holds his life at the service of the State. Reckless he may be—fond of pleasure or of adventure—all kinds of bye-motives and mean impulses may have determined the choice of his profession, and may affect (to all appearance exclusively) his daily conduct in it; but our estimate of him is based on this ultimate fact—of which we are well assured—that put him in a fortress breach, with all the pleasures of the world behind him, and only death and his duty in front of him, he will keep his face to the front; and he knows that his choice may be put to him at any moment—and has beforehand taken his part—virtually takes such part continually—does, in reality, die daily[1].

Not less is the respect we pay to the lawyer and physician, founded ultimately on their self-sacrifice. Whatever the learning or acuteness of a great lawyer, our chief respect for him depends on our belief that, set in a judge's seat, he will strive to judge justly, come of it what may. Could we suppose that he would take bribes, and use his acuteness and legal knowledge to give plausibility to iniquitous decisions, no degree of intellect would win for him our respect. Nothing will win it, short of our tacit conviction, that in all important acts of his life justice is first with him; his own interest, second.

In the case of a physician, the ground of the honour we render him is clearer still. Whatever his science, we would

[1] 1 Corinthians xv. 31.

shrink from him in horror if we found him regard his patients merely as subjects to experiment upon; much more, if we found that, receiving bribes from persons interested in their deaths, he was using his best skill to give poison in the mask of medicine.

Finally, the principle holds with utmost clearness as it respects clergymen. No goodness of disposition will excuse want of science in a physician, or of shrewdness in an advocate; but a clergyman, even though his power of intellect be small, is respected on the presumed ground of his unselfishness and serviceableness.

Now, there can be no question but that the tact, foresight, decision, and other mental powers, required for the successful management of a large mercantile concern, if not such as could be compared with those of a great lawyer, general, or divine, would at least match the general conditions of mind required in the subordinate officers of a ship, or of a regiment, or in the curate of a country parish. If, therefore, all the efficient members of the so-called liberal professions are still, somehow, in public estimate of honour, preferred before the head of a commercial firm, the reason must lie deeper than in the measurement of their several powers of mind.

And the essential reason for such preference will be found to lie in the fact that the merchant is presumed to act always selfishly. His work may be very necessary to the community; but the motive of it is understood to be wholly personal. The merchant's first object in all his dealings must be (the public believe) to get as much for himself, and leave as little to his neighbour (or customer) as possible. Enforcing this upon him, by political statute, as the necessary principle of his action; recommending it to him on all occasions, and themselves reciprocally adopting it, proclaiming vociferously, for law of the universe, that a buyer's function is to cheapen, and a seller's to cheat,—the public,

nevertheless, involuntarily condemn the man of commerce for his compliance with their own statement, and stamp him for ever as belonging to an inferior grade of human personality.

This they will find, eventually, they must give up doing. They must not cease to condemn selfishness; but they will have to discover a kind of commerce which is not exclusively selfish. Or, rather, they will have to discover that there never was, or can be, any other kind of commerce; that this which they have called commerce was not commerce at all, but cozening; and that a true merchant differs as much from a merchant according to laws of modern political economy, as the hero of the *Excursion* from Autolycus[1]. They will find that commerce is an occupation which gentlemen will every day see more need to engage in, rather than in the businesses of talking to men, or slaying them; that, in true commerce, as in true preaching, or true fighting, it is necessary to admit the idea of occasional voluntary loss; —that sixpences have to be lost, as well as lives, under a sense of duty; that the market may have its martyrdoms as well as the pulpit, and trade its heroisms as well as war.

May have—in the final issue, must have—and only has not had yet, because men of heroic temper have always been misguided in their youth into other fields; not recognizing what is in our days, perhaps, the most important of all fields; so that, while many a zealous person loses his life in trying to teach the form of a gospel, very few will lose a hundred pounds in showing the practice of one.

The fact is, that people never have had clearly explained to them the true functions of a merchant with respect to other people. I should like the reader to be very clear about this.

[1] For references to the thief of Greek legend, see *Queen of the Air*, § 28; he was Shakespeare's "Snapper-up of unconsidered trifles," *Fors Clavigera*, Letters 8 and 58.

Five great intellectual professions, relating to daily necessities of life, have hitherto existed—three exist necessarily, in every civilized nation:

The Soldier's profession is to *defend* it.

The Pastor's to *teach* it.

The Physician's to *keep it in health.*

The Lawyer's to *enforce justice* in it.

The Merchant's to *provide* for it.

And the duty of all these men is, on due occasion, to *die* for it.

"On due occasion," namely:—

The Soldier, rather than leave his post in battle.

The Physician, rather than leave his post in plague.

The Pastor, rather than teach Falsehood.

The Lawyer, rather than countenance Injustice.

The Merchant—what is *his* "due occasion" of death?

It is the main question for the merchant, as for all of us. For, truly, the man who does not know when to die, does not know how to live.

CONVENTIONALISM IN ART

The Two Paths. Vol. xvi, pp. 323–324.

If we are required to represent a human figure with stone only, we cannot represent its colour; we reduce its colour to whiteness. That is not elevating the human body, but degrading it; only it would be a much greater degradation to give its colour falsely. Diminish beauty as much as you will, but do not misrepresent it. So again, when we are sculpturing a face, we can't carve its eyelashes. The face is none the better for wanting its eyelashes—it is injured by the want; but would be much more injured by a clumsy representation of them.

Neither can we carve the hair. We must be content with the conventionalism of vile solid knots and lumps of marble, instead of the golden cloud that encompasses the fair human face with its waving mystery. The lumps of marble are not an elevated representation of hair—they are a degraded one; yet better than any attempt to imitate hair with the incapable material.

In all cases in which such imitation is attempted, instant degradation to a still lower level is the result. For the effort to imitate shows that the workman has only a base and poor conception of the beauty of the reality—else he would know his task to be hopeless, and give it up at once: so that all endeavours to avoid conventionalism, when the material demands it, result from insensibility to truth, and are among the worst forms of vulgarity. Hence, in the greatest Greek statues, the hair is very slightly indicated, not because the sculptor disdained hair, but because he knew what it was too well to touch it insolently. I do not doubt but that the Greek painters drew hair exactly as Titian does. Modern attempts to produce finished pictures on glass result from the same base vulgarism. No man who knows what painting means, can endure a painted glass window which emulates painters' work. But he rejoices in a glowing mosaic of broken colour: for that is what the glass has the special gift and right of producing.

VOCATION AND EDUCATION

A Joy for Ever. Vol. XVI, pp. 118–121.

It is indeed probable, that intense disposition for art will conquer the most formidable obstacles, if the surrounding circumstances are such as at all to present the idea of such conquest to the mind; but we have no ground for concluding that Giotto would ever have been more than a

shepherd, if Cimabue had not by chance found him drawing[1]; or that among the shepherds of the Apennines there were no other Giottos, undiscovered by Cimabue. We are too much in the habit of considering happy accidents as what are called "special Providences"; and thinking that when any great work needs to be done, the man who is to do it will certainly be pointed out by Providence, be he shepherd or seaboy; and prepared for his work by all kinds of minor providences, in the best possible way. Whereas all the analogies of God's operations in other matters prove the contrary of this; we find that "of thousand seeds, He often brings but one to bear[2]," often not one; and the one seed which He appoints to bear is allowed to bear crude or perfect fruit according to the dealings of the husbandman with it. And there cannot be a doubt in the mind of any person accustomed to take broad and logical views of the world's history, that its events are ruled by Providence in precisely the same manner as its harvests; that the seeds of good and evil are broadcast among men, just as the seeds of thistles and fruits are; and that according to the force of our industry, and wisdom of our husbandry, the ground will bring forth to us figs or thistles. So that when it seems needed that a certain work should be done for the world, and no man is there to do it, we have no right to say that God did not wish it to be done; and therefore sent no men able to do it. The probability (if I wrote my own convictions, I should say certainty) is, that He sent many men, hundreds of men, able to do it; and that we have rejected them, or crushed them; by our previous folly of conduct or of institution, we have rendered it impossible to dis-

[1] Cimabue (1240–1302), Florentine painter; he is said to have found Giotto, then a shepherd-boy, tending sheep and drawing a lamb on a flat stone.

[2] *In Memoriam*, LIV:

"And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear."

tinguish, or impossible to reach them; and when the need for them comes, and we suffer for the want of them, it is not that God refuses to send us deliverers, and specially appoints all our consequent sufferings; but that He has sent, and we have refused, the deliverers; and the pain is then wrought out by His eternal law, as surely as famine is wrought out by eternal law for a nation which will neither plough nor sow. No less are we in error in supposing, as we so frequently do, that if a man be found, he is sure to be in all respects fitted for the work to be done, as the key is to the lock: and that every accident which happened in the forging him, only adapted him more truly to the wards. It is pitiful to hear historians beguiling themselves and their readers, by tracing in the early history of great men the minor circumstances which fitted them for the work they did, without ever taking notice of the other circumstances which as assuredly unfitted them for it; so concluding that miraculous interposition prepared them in all points for everything, and that they did all that could have been desired or hoped for from them: whereas the certainty of the matter is that, throughout their lives, they were thwarted and corrupted by some things as certainly as they were helped and disciplined by others; and that, in the kindliest and most reverent view which can justly be taken of them, they were but poor mistaken creatures, struggling with a world more profoundly mistaken than they;—assuredly sinned against or sinning in thousands of ways, and bringing out at last a maimed result—not what they might or ought to have done, but all that could be done against the world's resistance, and in spite of their own sorrowful falsehood to themselves.

And this being so, it is the practical duty of a wise nation, first to withdraw, as far as may be, its youth from destructive influences; then to try its material as far as possible, and to lose the use of none that is good. I do not mean by "with-

drawing from destructive influences" the keeping of youths out of trials; but the keeping them out of the way of things purely and absolutely mischievous. I do not mean that we should shade our green corn in all heat, and shelter it in all frost, but only that we should dyke out the inundation from it, and drive the fowls away from it. Let your youth labour and suffer; but do not let it starve, nor steal, nor blaspheme.

It is not, of course, in my power here to enter into details of schemes of education; and it will be long before the results of experiments now in progress will give data for the solution of the most difficult questions connected with the subject, of which the principal one is the mode in which the chance of advancement in life is to be extended to all, and yet made compatible with contentment in the pursuit of lower avocations by those whose abilities do not qualify them for the higher. But the general principle of trial schools lies at the root of the matter—of schools, that is to say, in which the knowledge offered and discipline enforced shall be all a part of a great assay of the human soul, and in which the one shall be increased, the other directed, as the tried heart and brain will best bear, and no otherwise. One thing, however, I must say, that in this trial I believe all emulation to be a false motive, and all giving of prizes a false means. All that you can depend upon in a boy, as significative of true power, likely to issue in good fruit, is his will to work for the work's sake, not his desire to surpass his school-fellows; and the aim of the teaching you give him ought to be, to prove to him and strengthen in him his own separate gift, not to puff him into swollen rivalry with those who are everlastingly greater than he: still less ought you to hang favours and ribands about the neck of the creature who is the greatest, to make the rest envy him. Try to make them love him and follow him, not struggle with him.

POVERTY

Academy Notes. Vol. XIV, pp. 174–175.

HE[1] approaches the simplest subject with perfect feeling of its great humanity, conscious of all the most solemn pathos which there is in the crowned sorrows of poverty and calm submissions of toil—interpreting to the full, and for the first time in the history of sacred paintings, the great words of the first Beatitude[2]. For the poverty which was honoured by the great painters and thinkers of the Middle Ages was an ostentatious, almost a presumptuous poverty: if not this, at least it was chosen and accepted—the poverty of men who had given their goods to feed the simpler poor, and who claimed in honour what they had lost in luxury; or, at the best, in claiming nothing for themselves, had still a proud understanding of their own self-denial, and a confident hope of future reward. But it has been reserved for this age to perceive and tell the blessedness of another kind of poverty than this; not voluntary nor proud, but accepted and submissive; not clear-sighted nor triumphant, but subdued and patient: partly patient in tenderness—of God's will; partly patient in blindness—of man's oppression; too laborious to be thoughtful—too innocent to be conscious—too long experienced in sorrow to be hopeful—waiting in its peaceful darkness for the unconceived dawn; yet not without its own sweet, complete, untainted happiness, like intermittent notes of birds before the daybreak, or the first gleams of heaven's amber on the eastern grey. Such poverty as this it has been reserved for this age of ours to honour while it afflicted; it is reserved for the age to come to honour it—and to spare.

[1] Edouard Frère, painter of *The Gleaner Boy*.
[2] Matthew v. 3. The blessing on "the poor in spirit."

POVERTY

A Joy for Ever. Vol. XVI, pp. 15–17.

AMONG the various characteristics of the age in which we live, as compared with other ages of this not yet *very* experienced world, one of the most notable appears to me to be the just and wholesome contempt in which we hold poverty. I repeat, the *just* and *wholesome* contempt; though I see that some of my hearers looked surprised at the expression. I assure them, I use it in sincerity, and I should not have ventured to ask you to listen to me this evening, unless I had entertained a profound respect for wealth—true wealth, that is to say; for, of course, we ought to respect neither wealth nor anything else that is false of its kind: and the distinction between real and false wealth is one of the points on which I shall have a few words presently to say to you. But true wealth I hold, as I said, in great honour; and sympathize, for the most part with that extraordinary feeling of the present age which publicly pays this honour to riches.

I cannot, however, help noticing how extraordinary it is, and how this epoch of ours differs from all bygone epochs in having no philosophical nor religious worshippers of the ragged godship of poverty. In the classical ages, not only were there people who voluntarily lived in tubs, and who used gravely to maintain the superiority of tub-life to town-life, but the Greeks and Latins seem to have looked on these eccentric, and I do not scruple to say, absurd people, with as much respect as we do upon large capitalists and landed proprietors; so that really, in those days, no one could be described as purse proud, but only as empty-purse proud. And no less distinct than the honour which those curious Greek people pay to their conceited poor, is the

disrespectful manner in which they speak of the rich; so that one cannot listen long either to them or to the Roman writers who imitated them, without finding oneself entangled in all sorts of plausible absurdities; hard upon being convinced of the uselessness of collecting that heavy yellow substance which we call gold, and led generally to doubt all the most established maxims of political economy.

Nor are matters much better in the Middle Ages. For the Greeks and Romans contented themselves with mocking at rich people, and constructing merry dialogues between Charon and Diogenes or Menippus[1], in which the ferryman and the cynic rejoiced together as they saw kings and rich men coming down to the shore of Acheron, in lamenting and lamentable crowds, casting their crowns into the dark waters, and searching, sometimes in vain, for the last coin out of all their treasures that could ever be of use to them[2].

But these Pagan views of the matter were indulgent, compared with those which were held in the Middle Ages, when wealth seems to have been looked upon by the best men not only as contemptible, but as criminal. The purse round the neck is, then, one of the principal signs of condemnation in the pictured Inferno[3]; and the Spirit of Poverty is reverenced with subjection of heart, and faithfulness of affection, like that of a loyal knight for his lady, or a loyal subject for his queen. And truly, it requires some boldness to quit ourselves of these feelings, and to confess their partiality or their error, which, nevertheless, we are certainly bound to do. For wealth is simply one of the greatest powers which can be entrusted to human hands: a power, not indeed to be envied, because it seldom makes us happy; but still less to be abdicated or despised; while,

[1] Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead.*

[2] The fee paid to Charon for ferrying a soul across the Styx was a small coin placed in the mouth of the corpse.

[3] See *Inferno*, XVII. 52–57, the punishment of usurers.

in these days, and in this country, it has become a power all the more notable, in that the possessions of a rich man are not represented, as they used to be, by wedges of gold or coffers of jewels, but by masses of men variously employed, over whose bodies and minds the wealth, according to its direction, exercises harmful or helpful influence, and becomes, in that alternative, Mammon either of Unrighteousness or of Righteousness.

ART AND RELIGION

Modern Painters (5). Vol. VII, pp. 265–268.

PERHAPS an accurate analysis of the schools of art of all time might show us that when the immortality of the soul was practically and completely believed, the elements of decay, danger, and grief in visible things were always disregarded. However this may be, it is assuredly so in the early Christian schools. The ideas of danger or decay seem not merely repugnant, but inconceivable to them; the expression of immortality and perpetuity is alone possible. I do not mean that they take no note of the absolute fact of corruption. This fact the early painters often compel themselves to look fuller in the front than any other men: as in the way they usually paint the Deluge (the raven feeding on the bodies), and in all the various triumphs and processions of the power of Death, which formed one great chapter of religious teaching and painting, from Orcagna's[1] time to the close of the Purist epoch. But I mean that this external fact of corruption is separated in their minds from the main conditions of their work; and its horror enters no more into their general treatment of landscape than the

[1] Orcagna (1308–1368), a Florentine painter, follower of Giotto; he was also sculptor, architect, worker in mosaic, and poet.

fear of murder or martyrdom, both of which they had nevertheless continually to represent. None of these things appeared to them as affecting the general dealings of the Deity with His world. Death, pain, and decay were simply momentary accidents in the course of immortality, which never ought to exercise any depressing influence over the hearts of men, or in the life of Nature. God, in intense life, peace, and helping power, was always and everywhere. Human bodies, at one time or another, had indeed to be made dust of, and raised from it; and this becoming dust was hurtful and humiliating, but not in the least melancholy, nor, in any very high degree, important; except to thoughtless persons who needed sometimes to be reminded of it, and whom, not at all fearing the things much himself, the painter accordingly did remind of it, somewhat sharply.

A similar condition of mind seems to have been attained, not unfrequently, in modern times, by persons whom either narrowness of circumstance or education, or vigorous moral efforts, have guarded from the troubling of the world, so as to give them firm and childlike trust in the power and presence of God, together with peace of conscience, and a belief in the passing of all evil into some form of good. It is impossible that a person thus disciplined should feel, in any of its more acute phases, the sorrow for any of the phenomena of nature, or terror in any material danger which would occur to another. The absence of personal fear, the consciousness of security as great in the midst of pestilence and storm, as amidst beds of flowers on a summer's morning, and the certainty that whatever appeared evil, or was assuredly painful, must eventually issue in a far greater and enduring good—this general feeling and conviction, I say, would gradually lull, and at last put to entire rest, the physical sensations of grief and fear; so that the man would look upon danger without dread,—expect pain without lamentation.

It may perhaps be thought that this is a very high and right state of mind.

Unfortunately, it appears that the attainment of it is never possible without inducing some form of intellectual weakness.

No painter belonging to the purist[1] religious schools ever mastered his art. Perugino[2] nearly did so; but it was because he was more rational—more a man of the world—than the rest. No literature exists of a high class produced by minds in the pure religious temper. On the contrary, a great deal of literature exists, produced by persons in that temper, which is markedly, and very far, below average literary work.

The reason of this I believe to be, that the right faith of man is not intended to give him repose, but to enable him to do his work. It is not intended that he should look away from the place he lives in now, and cheer himself with thoughts of the place he is to live in next, but that he should look stoutly into this world, in faith that if he does his work thoroughly here, some good to others or himself, with which however he is not at present concerned, will come of it hereafter. And this kind of brave, but not very hopeful or cheerful faith, I perceive to be always rewarded by clear practical success and splendid intellectual power; while the faith which dwells on the future fades away into rosy mist, and emptiness of musical air. That result indeed follows naturally enough on its habit of assuming that things must be right, or must come right, when, probably, the fact is, that so far as we are concerned, they are entirely wrong; and going wrong: and also on its weak and false way of looking on what these religious persons call "the bright side of things," that is to say, on one side of them only, when God has given them two sides, and intended us to see both.

[1] Printed "purest" in the original edition, but the MS. has "purist."
[2] Perugino, Vannucci (b. 1446), an Umbrian painter.

THE PATHETIC FALLACY

Modern Painters (3). Vol. v, pp. 204–205, 208–209.

Now putting these tiresome and absurd words quite out of our way, we may go on at our ease to examine the point in question,—namely, the difference between the ordinary, proper, and true appearances of things to us; and the extraordinary, or false appearances, when we are under the influence of emotion, or contemplative fancy; false appearances, I say, as being entirely unconnected with any real power or character in the object, and only imputed to it by us.

For instance—

> The spendthrift crocus, bursting through the mould
> Naked and shivering, with his cup of gold[1].

This is very beautiful, and yet very untrue. The crocus is not a spendthrift, but a hardy plant; its yellow is not gold, but saffron. How is it that we enjoy so much the having it put into our heads that it is anything else than a plain crocus?

It is an important question. For, throughout our past reasonings about art, we have always found that nothing could be good or useful, or ultimately pleasurable, which was untrue. But here is something pleasurable in written poetry, which is nevertheless *un*true. And what is more, if we think over our favourite poetry, we shall find it full of this kind of fallacy, and that we like it all the more for being so.

It will appear also, on consideration of the matter, that this fallacy is of two principal kinds. Either, as in this case of the crocus, it is the fallacy of wilful fancy, which involves

[1] From *Astraea*, a poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes, author of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, etc.

no real expectation that it will be believed; or else it is a fallacy caused by an excited state of the feelings, making us, for the time, more or less irrational. Of the cheating of the fancy we shall have to speak presently; but in this chapter I want to examine the nature of the other error, that which the mind admits when affected strongly by emotion. Thus, for instance, in *Alton Locke*,—

> They rowed her in across the rolling foam—
> The cruel, crawling foam[1].

The foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl. The state of mind which attributes to it these characters of a living creature is one in which the reason is unhinged by grief. All violent feelings have the same effect. They produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things, which I would generally characterize as the "pathetic fallacy."

Now we are in the habit of considering this fallacy as eminently a character of poetical description, and the temper of mind in which we allow it, as one eminently poetical, because passionate. But I believe, if we look well into the matter, that we shall find the greatest poets do not often admit this kind of falseness,—that it is only the second order of poets who much delight in it....

The temperament which admits the pathetic fallacy, is ...that of a mind and body in some sort too weak to deal fully with what is before them or upon them; borne away, or over-clouded, or over-dazzled by emotion; and it is a more or less noble state, according to the force of the emotion which has induced it. For it is no credit to a man that he is not morbid or inaccurate in his perceptions, when he has no strength of feeling to warp them; and it is in general a sign of higher capacity and stand in the ranks of being, that the emotions should be strong enough to vanquish, partly, the intellect, and make it believe what they choose. But it is still a grander condition when the

[1] By Charles Kingsley: the poem first appeared in ch. xxvi of his novel *Alton Locke* (1850).

intellect also rises, till it is strong enough to assert its rule against, or together with, the utmost efforts of the passions; and the whole man stands in an iron glow, white hot, perhaps, but still strong, and in no wise evaporating; even if he melts, losing none of his weight.

So, then, we have the three ranks: the man who perceives rightly, because he does not feel, and to whom the primrose is very accurately the primrose, because he does not love it. Then, secondly, the man who perceives wrongly, because he feels, and to whom the primrose is anything else than a primrose: a star, or a sun, or a fairy's shield, or a forsaken maiden. And then, lastly, there is the man who perceives rightly in spite of his feelings, and to whom the primrose is for ever nothing else than itself—a little flower apprehended in the very plain and leafy fact of it, whatever and how many soever the associations and passions may be that crowd around it. And, in general, these three classes may be rated in comparative order, as the men who are not poets at all, and the poets of the second order, and the poets of the first; only however great a man may be, there are always some subjects which *ought* to throw him off his balance; some, by which his poor human capacity of thought should be conquered, and brought into the inaccurate and vague state of perception, so that the language of the highest inspiration becomes broken, obscure, and wild in metaphor, resembling that of the weaker man, overborne by weaker things.

And thus, in full, there are four classes: the men who feel nothing, and therefore see truly; the men who feel strongly, think weakly, and see untruly (second order of poets); the men who feel strongly, think strongly, and see truly (first order of poets); and the men who, strong as human creatures can be, are yet submitted to influences stronger than they, and see in a sort untruly, because what they see is inconceivably above them. This last is the usual condition of prophetic inspiration.

MIND AND BODY

Modern Painters (2). Vol. IV, pp. 178–182.

THE visible operation of the mind upon the body may be classed under three heads.

First, the operation of the intellectual powers upon the features, in the fine cutting and chiselling of them, and removal from them of signs of sensuality and sloth, by which they are blunted and deadened; and substitution of energy and intensity for vacancy and insipidity (by which wants alone the faces of many fair women are utterly spoiled and rendered valueless); and by the keenness given to the eye and fine moulding and development to the brow, of which effects Sir Charles Bell[1] has well described the desirableness and opposition to brutal types, only this he has not sufficiently observed, that there are certain virtues of the intellect in measure inconsistent with each other, as perhaps great subtlety with great comprehensiveness, and high analytical with high imaginative power: or that at least, if consistent and compatible, their signs upon the features are not the same, so that the outward form cannot express both, without in a measure expressing neither; and so there are certain separate virtues of the outward form correspondent with the more constant employment or more prevailing capacity of the brain, as the piercing keenness, or open and reflective comprehensiveness, of the eye and forehead: and that all these virtues of form are ideal, only those the most so which are the signs of the worthiest powers of intellect, though which these may be, we will not at present stay to enquire.

Secondly, the operation of the moral feelings conjointly

[1] Sir Charles Bell (1774–1842), surgeon and professor of Anatomy; author of *Anatomy of Expression in Painting*.

with the intellectual powers on both the features and form. Now, the operation of the right moral feelings on the intellect is always for the good of the latter, for *it is not possible that selfishness should reason rightly in any respect*, but must be blind in its estimation of the worthiness of all things: neither anger, for that overpowers the reason or outcries it; neither sensuality, for that overgrows and chokes it; neither agitation, for that has no time to compare things together; neither enmity, for that must be unjust; neither fear, for that exaggerates all things; neither cunning and deceit, for that which is voluntarily untrue will soon be unwittingly so; but the great reasoners are self-command, and trust unagitated, and deep-looking Love, and Faith, which as she is above Reason, so she best holds the reins of it from her high seat; so that they err grossly who think of the right development even of the intellectual type as possible, unless we look to higher sources of beauty first. Nevertheless, though in their operation *upon* them the moral feelings are thus elevatory of the mental faculties, yet in their conjunction *with* them they seem to occupy, in their own fulness, such space as to absorb and overshadow all else; so that, the simultaneous exercise of both being in a sort impossible, we occasionally find the moral part in full development and action, without corresponding expansion of the intellect (though never without healthy condition of it), as in the condition described by Wordsworth,

> In such high hour
> Of visitation from the Living God,
> *Thought* was not[1];

only, if we look far enough, we shall perhaps find that it is not intelligence itself, but the immediate act and effort of a laborious, struggling, and imperfect intellectual faculty, with which high moral emotion is inconsistent; and though

[1] *The Excursion*, Book I ("The Wanderer"), l. 211.

we cannot, while we feel deeply, *reason* shrewdly, yet I doubt if, *except* when we feel deeply, we can ever *comprehend* fully; so that it is only the climbing and mole-like piercing, and not the sitting upon their central throne, nor emergence into light, of the intellectual faculties, which the full heart feeling allows not. Hence, therefore, in the indications of the countenance, they are only the hard cut lines, and rigid settings, and wasted hollows, speaking of past effort and painfulness of mental application, which are inconsistent with expression of moral feeling, for all these are of infelicitous augury; but not the full and serene development of habitual command in the look, and solemn thought in the brow; only these, in their unison with the signs of emotion, become softened and gradually confounded with a serenity and authority of nobler origin. But of the sweetness which that higher serenity (of happiness), and the dignity which that higher authority (of divine law, and not human reason), can and must stamp on the features, it would be futile to speak here at length: for I suppose that both are acknowledged on all hands, and that there is not any beauty but theirs to which men pay long obedience: at all events, if not by sympathy discovered, it is not in words explicable with what divine lines and lights the exercise of godliness and charity will mould and gild the hardest and coldest countenance, neither to what darkness their departure will consign the loveliest. For there is not any virtue the exercise of which, even momentarily, will not impress a new fairness upon the features: neither on them only, but on the whole body, both the intelligence and the moral faculties have operation; for even all the movements and gestures, however slight, are different in their modes according to the mind that governs them; and on the gentleness and decision of just feeling there follows a grace of action, and, through continuance of this, a grace of form, which by no discipline may be taught or attained.

The third point to be considered with respect to the corporeal expression of mental character is, that there is a certain period of the soul-culture when it begins to interfere with some of the characters of typical beauty belonging to the bodily frame, the stirring of the intellect wearing down the flesh, and the moral enthusiasm burning its way out to heaven, through the emaciation of the earthen vessel; and that there is, in this indication of subduing of the mortal by the immortal part, an ideal glory of perhaps a purer and higher range than that of the more perfect material form. We conceive, I think, more nobly of the weak presence of Paul than of the fair and ruddy countenance of David.

FEAR

Stones of Venice (3). Vol. XI, pp. 163–165.

Two great and principal passions are evidently appointed by the Deity to rule the life of man; namely, the love of God, and the fear of sin, and of its companion—Death. How many motives we have for Love, how much there is in the universe to kindle our admiration and to claim our gratitude, there are, happily, multitudes among us who both feel and teach. But it has not, I think, been sufficiently considered how evident, throughout the system of creation, is the purpose of God that we should often be affected by Fear; not the sudden, selfish, and contemptible fear of immediate danger, but the fear which arises out of the contemplation of great powers in destructive operation, and generally from the perception of the presence of death. Nothing appears to me more remarkable than the array of scenic magnificence by which the imagination is appalled, in myriads of instances, when the actual danger is com-

paratively small; so that the utmost possible impression of awe shall be produced upon the minds of all, though direct suffering is inflicted upon few. Consider, for instance, the moral effect of a single thunderstorm. Perhaps two or three persons may be struck dead within a space of a hundred square miles; and their death, unaccompanied by the scenery of the storm, would produce little more than a momentary sadness in the busy hearts of living men. But the preparation for the judgment, by all that mighty gathering of clouds; by the questioning of the forest leaves, in their terrified stillness, which way the winds shall go forth; by the murmuring to each other, deep in the distance, of the destroying angels before they draw forth their swords of fire; by the march of the funeral darkness in the midst of the noon-day, and the rattling of the dome of heaven beneath the chariot wheels of death;—on how many minds do not these produce an impression almost as great as the actual witnessing of the fatal issue! and how strangely are the expressions of the threatening elements fitted to the apprehension of the human soul! The lurid colour, the long, irregular, convulsive sound, the ghastly shapes of flaming and heaving cloud, are all as true and faithful in their appeal to our instinct of danger, as the moaning or wailing of the human voice itself is to our instinct of pity. It is not a reasonable calculating terror which they awake in us; it is no matter that we count distance by seconds, and measure probability by averages. That shadow of the thundercloud will still do its work upon our hearts, and we shall watch it passing away as if we stood upon the threshing-floor of Araunah[1].

And this is equally the case with respect to all the other destructive phenomena of the universe. From the mightiest of them to the gentlest, from the earthquake to the summer shower, it will be found that they are attended by certain

[1] 2 Samuel xxiv. 16.

aspects of threatening, which strike terror into the hearts of multitudes more numerous a thousandfold than those who actually suffer from the ministries of judgment; and that, beside the fearfulness of these immediately dangerous phenomena, there is an occult and subtle horror belonging to many aspects of the creation around us, calculated often to fill us with serious thought, even in our times of quietness and peace. I understand not the most dangerous, because most attractive form of modern infidelity, which, pretending to exalt the beneficence of the Deity, degrades it into a reckless infinitude of mercy, and blind obliteration of the work of sin: and which does this chiefly by dwelling on the manifold appearances of God's kindness on the face of creation. Such kindness is indeed everywhere and always visible; but not alone. Wrath and threatening are invariably mingled with the love; and in the utmost solitudes of nature, the existence of Hell seems to me as legibly declared by a thousand spiritual utterances, as that of Heaven. It is well for us to dwell with thankfulness on the unfolding of the flower, and the falling of the dew, and the sleep of the green fields in the sunshine; but the blasted trunk, the barren rock, the moaning of the bleak winds, the roar of the black, perilous, merciless whirlpools of the mountain streams, the solemn solitudes of moors and seas, the continual fading of all beauty into darkness, and of all strength into dust, have these no language for us? We may seek to escape their teaching by reasonings touching the good which is wrought out of all evil; but it is vain sophistry. The good succeeds to the evil as day succeeds the night, but so also the evil to the good. Gerizim and Ebal[1], birth and death, light and darkness, heaven and hell, divide the existence of man, and his Futurity.

[1] Deuteronomy xi. 29.

THE IMPERFECTION OF ALL GOOD ART

Stones of Venice (2). Vol. X, pp. 202–204.

ACCURATELY speaking, no good work whatever can be perfect, and *the demand for perfection is always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art.*

This for two reasons, both based on everlasting laws. The first, that no great man ever stops working till he has reached his point of failure: that is to say, his mind is always far in advance of his powers of execution, and the latter will now and then give way in trying to follow it; besides that he will always give to the inferior portions of his work only such inferior attention as they require; and according to his greatness he becomes so accustomed to the feeling of dissatisfaction with the best he can do, that in moments of lassitude or anger with himself he will not care though the beholder be dissatisfied also. I believe there has only been one man who would not acknowledge this necessity, and strove always to reach perfection, Leonardo[1]; the end of his vain effort being merely that he would take ten years to a picture and leave it unfinished. And therefore, if we are to have great men working at all, or less men doing their best, the work will be imperfect, however beautiful. Of human work none but what is bad can be perfect, in its own bad way.

The second reason is, that imperfection is in some sort essential to all that we know of life. It is the sign of life in a mortal body, that is to say, of a state of progress and

[1] Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), painter, sculptor, architect, and engineer: lived at Milan, Florence, and Paris. His best-known works are the fresco of the "Last Supper" at Milan, the "Monna Lisa" in the Louvre, and the "Virgin of the Rocks" in the National Gallery.

change. Nothing that lives is, or can be, rigidly perfect; part of it is decaying, part nascent. The foxglove blossom,—a third part bud, a third part past, a third part in full bloom,—is a type of the life of this world. And in all things that live there are certain irregularities and deficiencies which are not only signs of life, but sources of beauty. No human face is exactly the same in its lines on each side, no leaf perfect in its lobes, no branch in its symmetry. All admit irregularity as they imply change; and to banish imperfection is to destroy expression, to check exertion, to paralyze vitality. All things are literally better, lovelier, and more beloved for the imperfections which have been divinely appointed, that the law of human life may be Effort, and the law of human judgment Mercy.

Accept this then for a universal law, that neither architecture nor any other noble work of man can be good unless it be imperfect; and let us be prepared for the otherwise strange fact, which we shall discern clearly as we approach the period of the Renaissance, that the first cause of the fall of the arts of Europe was a relentless requirement of perfection, incapable alike either of being silenced by veneration for greatness, or softened into forgiveness of simplicity.

A CONFESSION OF FAILURE

Sesame and Lilies. Vol. XVIII, pp. 151–152.

And still I could tell of failure, and failure repeated, as years went on; but I have trespassed enough on your patience to show you, in part, the causes of my discouragement. Now let me more deliberately tell you its results. You know there is a tendency in the minds of many men,

when they are heavily disappointed in the main purposes of their life, to feel, and perhaps in warning, perhaps in mockery, to declare, that life itself is a vanity. Because it has disappointed them, they think its nature is of disappointment always, or at best, of pleasure that can be grasped by imagination only; that the cloud of it has no strength nor fire within; but is a painted cloud only, to be delighted in, yet despised. You know how beautifully Pope has expressed this particular phase of thought:—

> Meanwhile opinion gilds, with varying rays,
> These painted clouds that beautify our days;
> Each want of happiness by hope supplied,
> And each vacuity of sense, by pride.
> Hope builds as fast as Knowledge can destroy;
> In Folly's cup, still laughs the bubble joy.
> One pleasure past, another still we gain,
> And not a vanity is given in vain[1].

But the effect of failure upon my own mind has been just the reverse of this. The more that my life disappointed me, the more solemn and wonderful it became to me. It seemed, contrarily to Pope's saying, that the vanity of it *was* indeed given in vain; but that there was something behind the veil of it, which was not vanity. It became to me not a painted cloud, but a terrible and impenetrable one: not a mirage, which vanished as I drew near, but a pillar of darkness, to which I was forbidden to draw near. For I saw that both my own failure, and such success in petty things as in its poor triumph seemed to me worse than failure, came from the want of sufficiently earnest effort to understand the whole law and meaning of existence, and to bring it to noble and due end; as, on the other hand, I saw more and more clearly that all enduring success in the arts, or in any other occupation, had come from the ruling of lower purposes, not by a conviction of their nothingness, but by

[1] Pope's *Essay on Man*, II, 283–290.

a solemn faith in the advancing power of human nature, or in the promise, however dimly apprehended, that the mortal part of it would one day be swallowed up in immortality[1]; and that, indeed, the arts themselves never had reached any vital strength or honour, but in the effort to proclaim this immortality, and in the service either of great and just religion, or of some unselfish patriotism, and law of such national life as must be the foundation of religion.

THE SORROW OF AGE

St Mark's Rest. Vol. XXIV, pp. 370–372.

AMONG the many discomforts of advancing age[2], which no one understands till he feels them, there is one which I seldom have heard complained of, and which, therefore, I find unexpectedly disagreeable. I knew, by report, that when I grew old I should most probably wish to be young again; and, very certainly, be ashamed of much that I had done, or omitted, in the active years of life. I was prepared for sorrow in the loss of friends by death; and for pain, in the loss of myself, by weakness or sickness. These, and many other minor calamities, I have been long accustomed to anticipate; and therefore to read, in preparation for them, the confessions of the weak, and the consolations of the wise.

But, as the time of rest, or of departure, approaches me, not only do many of the evils I had heard of, and prepared for, present themselves in more grievous shapes than I had expected; but one which I had scarcely ever heard of, torments me increasingly every hour.

I had understood it to be in the order of things that the

[1] 2 Corinthians v. 4.

[2] Written in 1878, when Ruskin was nearly sixty.

aged should lament their vanishing life as an instrument they had never used, now to be taken away from them; but not as an instrument, only then perfectly tempered and sharpened, and snatched out of their hands at the instant they could have done some real service with it. Whereas, my own feeling, now, is that everything which has hitherto happened to me, or been done by me, whether well or ill has been fitting me to take greater fortune more prudently, and do better work more thoroughly. And just when I seem to be coming out of school—very sorry to have been such a foolish boy, yet having taken a prize or two, and expecting to enter now upon some more serious business than cricket,—I am dismissed by the Master I hoped to serve, with a—"That's all I want of you, sir."

I imagine the sorrowfulness of these feelings must be abated, in the minds of most men, by a pleasant vanity in their hope of being remembered as the discoverers, at least, of some important truth, or the founders of some exclusive system called after their own names. But I have never applied myself to discover anything, being content to praise what had already been discovered; and the only doctrine or system peculiar to me is the abhorrence of all that is doctrinal instead of demonstrable, and of all that is systematic instead of useful: so that *no true* disciple of mine will ever be a "Ruskinian"!—he will follow, not me, but the instincts of his own soul, and the guidance of its Creator. Which, though not a sorrowful subject of contemplation in itself, leaves me none of the common props and crutches of halting pride. I know myself to be a true master, because my pupils are well on the way to do better than I have done; but there is not always a sense of extreme pleasure in watching their advance, where one has no more strength, though more than ever the will, to companion them.

Not *always*—be it again confessed; but when I first read the legend of St George, ...my eyes grew wet

with tears of true delight; first, in the knowledge of so many beautiful things, at once given to me; and then in the surety of the wide good that the work thus begun would spring up into, in ways before wholly unconceived by me. It was like coming to the brow of some healthy moorland, where here and there one had watched, or helped, the reaper of some patch of thinly scattered corn; and seeing suddenly a great plain white to the harvest, far as the horizon.

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